

RIVERINE WARFARE:
NAVAL COMBAT IN THE SECOND SEMINOLE WAR
1835 - 1842

By
GEORGE EDWARD BUKER

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CHAPTER 1

THE NEW AND THE OLD

Riverine warfare is the extension of naval power to restricted, and often shallow, coastal and inland waterways. Currently the navy is engaged in such a conflict in the Mekong Delta in Vietnam. This has generated some interest in earlier engagements of a similar nature. The United States Navy's operations upon the western rivers during the Civil War is a classic example of this kind of combat. Yet our navy's first participation in such operations has gone virtually unnoticed. It was during the Second Seminole War, 1835-1842, that the assigned naval forces slowly evolved an organization for riverine warfare to be used against the Seminole Indians in the Florida Everglades.

This type of conflict should not be confused with amphibious assault or river crossing operations. Combat under these latter two conditions is based upon the assumption that the intervening water between the two forces is an obstacle to be surmounted. The army invasions of North Africa, Sicily, Italy, and Normandy in the European theater, and marine landings on Guadalcanal, Iwo Jima, and Okinawa in the Pacific are examples of

amphibious assault techniques developed during World War II. Again, in the European theater, the Third Army's bestriding of the Rhine is a modern study of river crossing. None of these should be classified as riverine warfare unless of course the term is used in a very broad connotation wherein naval combat is considered only in two environmental elements, either blue or shallow water, representing sea and riverine warfare respectively.

There is another type of waterborne conflict which has sometimes been classified as riverine warfare. This is the engagement between two nautical forces upon inland waters. The naval battles on Lake Champlain during both the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812, and on lakes Erie and Ontario in the latter war are examples of such struggles. The principal reason for excluding this category is that the form of combat is naval in its execution, notwithstanding the use of small vessels in restricted waters.

What then is riverine warfare? There must be further qualifications than the initial statement that it is the extension of naval power to restricted coastal and inland waters. Naturally the prime requisite for riverine warfare is a terrain with interior waterways. These may consist of a large and extensive river system traversing hostile territory, a coastal area with deep bays or estuaries leading to centers of population, or

extensive swamp lands serving as a refuge and base of operations for an enemy. Practitioners of riverine warfare employ such fluid concourses as the basic means by which to reach the enemy. The thrust into the enemy's land would, in most cases, be met by military rather than naval resistance. If this is so, then the major confrontations would not be naval in structure. Therefore, riverine forces must be combat trained amphibians organized for sustained operations in both elements. The basic combat unit in such warfare, due to the operational terrain, will generally be small. In summation, riverine warfare is a specialized form of combat neither naval nor military, but a blending of the two, conducted in a riverine environment.

During the three and a half decades prior to the Second Seminole War the United States Navy developed a cruiser-commerce-raiding philosophy. The legacy from the Revolutionary War was the foundation for such a concept. Naval vessels were sent out to cruise the high seas and prey upon the British merchant fleet. For our small struggling nation to match the British royal navy in ships-of-the-line was impossible, but to employ cruisers to seek merchantmen at sea was relatively easy. The successful single-warship encounters with the enemy further strengthened this concept, and there were enough of them to foster the belief that this was the proper scope for naval operations. The decisive

impact of the French fleet off Yorktown escaped many Americans who looked only to their own maritime exploits for naval guidance. For the war as a whole, this meant single ship cruising. There were only three instances of truly multi-ship operations: the raid upon the Bahamas, the battle of Valcour Island on Lake Champlain (both in 1776), and the ill-fated Penobscot Expedition of 1779.¹

The quasi-war with France in the closing years of the eighteenth century strengthened the cruiser-commerce-raiding strategy. Again American success was out of context with the overall situation. France had suffered serious defeats at the hands of the British fleet at Cape St. Vincent, Camperdown, and the Nile.² She could spare few men-of-war for the American conflict in the Caribbean while the victorious British were so close to her shores. The nascent American navy was free to engage the numerous small, shallow draft privateers as well as the few French cruisers which managed to escape the British. Against this foe the United States Navy conducted itself rather well. Its victories obscured the protective role of the British navy. The result for the Americans was to promote the acceptance of the strategy of guerre de course.

In the War of 1812, the single-ship cruiser strategy was further strengthened. On the open seas there were twenty-five single-ship engagements between British and American men-of-war. Our navy won thirteen

of them.³ In commerce-raiding over 1,000 merchantmen were captured, which inflicted enough injury upon Britain to produce the political desire to meet at the peace-table.⁴ In the final analysis, these exploits convinced the Americans that the strategy of guerre de course was a sound naval philosophy.

The cruiser-commerce-raiding concept produced certain effects. It promoted individual ship handling and neglected multi-ship evolutions. When two ships fell in company the senior captain might act as a temporary squadron commander, but each vessel received its orders independently from the Navy Department. Under such a system the ship's captain could develop more initiative, but complex operations (especially among diverse classes of vessels) were strictly limited. It was not until after the War of 1812 that squadron organization in the navy became formalized. The Mediterranean Squadron, formed in 1815 in response to the threat to our commerce from the Barbary states, was the first to be established. Later the West India Squadron was added in 1822 to deal with piracy in the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea.

The secretary of the navy ran professional affairs, including naval operations, while the Board of Commissioners (the senior professional group composed of three navy captains) handled technical matters and procurement aspects for the Navy Department. Thus the

secretary, at the seat of the government, actively participated in operational decisions with his commanders afloat.⁵ This further strengthened the role of individual ship commands while delaying the development of integrated fleet operations. It also promoted the practice of individual officers writing directly to the secretary rather than through the chain of command.

Single-ship cruising left little opportunity for joint army-navy operations. The few common ventures could only be described as cooperation between two independent organizations, and not as a joint action of the two services. In consequence many naval officers misunderstood the military role, and army officers failed to understand the seagoing functions of the navy.

The cruiser-commerce-raiding strategy fostered traits and attitudes among naval officers which were the antithesis of those necessary for riverine warfare. Riverine warfare needed: a naval command familiar with setting up and directing complex operations utilizing a variety of diverse forces to achieve an overall objective; a naval command ready to accept the principles of joint operations rather than the more individualistic concept of cooperation; and finally, a naval command trained for military as well as naval concepts and able to blend the two to match a given situation. The result of years of adherence to the strategy of guerre de course delayed the development of a philosophy for riverine warfare in

the Indian War in Florida. Only after the more flexible junior officers of the navy began to take command did this evolution towards riverine warfare take place.

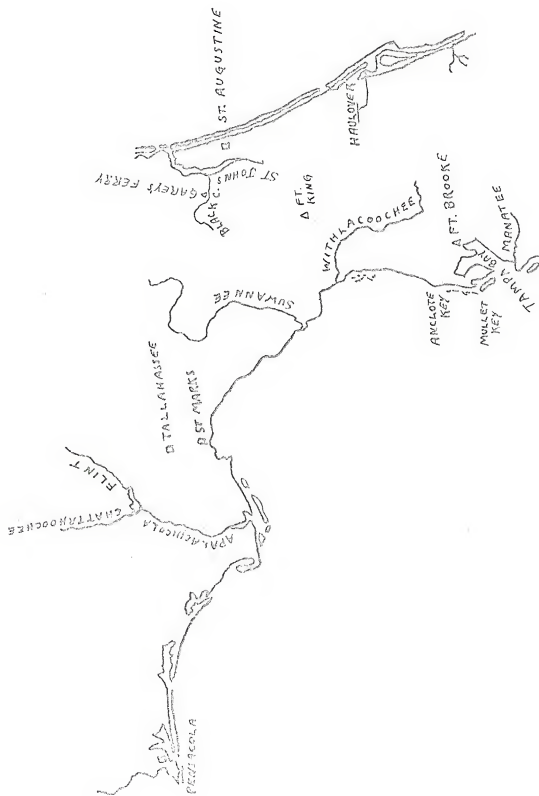


Figure 1. Northern theater of the war

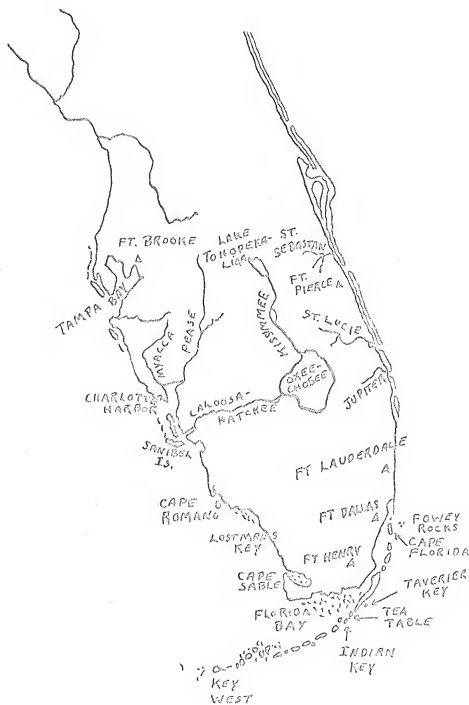


Figure 2. Southern theater of the war

CHAPTER 2

WEST INDIA SQUADRON

As the time approached for the removal of the Seminole Indians from their homeland, General Duncan L. Clinch, the army commander in Florida, requested the assistance of a revenue cutter from the Treasury Department. He proposed that this ship should cruise along the west coast of Florida, during the month of December, 1835, ordering the Indians to move to Fort Brooke. This would be the first step in their migration to the West. His request was modified in Washington so that a navy vessel was assigned. The Secretary of the Navy Mahlon Dickerson issued the necessary instructions to Commodore Alexander J. Dallas, commander of the West India Squadron, on October 29, 1835.¹ This appeared to be the extent of the service the navy would be called upon to perform.

Major Francis L. Dade, leading two companies of regulars from Fort Brooke to Fort King, marched into an ambush on the morning of December 23, and was wiped out with his entire command of 108, except for three men. That same afternoon another band shot and killed the Indian Agent Wiley Thompson and his companion

Lieutenant Constantino Smith near the agency at Fort King. Three days later the Battle of the Withlacoochee was fought. Fear now caused white settlers to move into the populated centers at St. Augustine, Tallahassee, and Fort Brooke on Tampa Bay. At the southern extremity of the peninsula, similar but lesser activity was taking place. A group of hostiles attacked and murdered William Cooley's wife, three children, and Joseph Flinton, the children's tutor, on January 4, 1836,² while Cooley was away from his home on New River. The settlers of this area, including the lighthouse keepers at Cape Florida, began moving south to the larger communities at Indian Key and Key West. All of these activities brought a flurry of calls to the naval forces for aid.

George K. Walker, the acting governor of Florida, requested that a small naval force be organized to operate along the shore and rivers of west Florida.³ The governor himself, John H. Eaton, who happened to be in Pensacola the day Master Commandant Thomas T. Webb brought his sloop of war Vandalia into the bay, followed up this request.⁴ He made a direct requisition upon Captain Webb for two officers, twenty-five or thirty men, two boats, some light artillery, side arms, and provisions. In addition, he chartered a steamboat for this expedition.

Four days later Lieutenant Edward T. Doughty of

the Vandalia departed Pensacola with twenty-nine sailors and marines in the steamer towing two small boats.⁵

Doughty was ordered to proceed to Tampa Bay running along the shore as close to land as possible to search out any Indians who might be traveling by canoe. If he found any friendly Seminoles they were to be taken into protective custody. Hostile groups were to be cut off from shore and captured. Governor Eaton warned that Spanish fishing vessels from Cuba might be carrying arms to the Seminoles, and, if there was any reason to doubt the legitimacy of one of them, Doughty was to bring it in to the nearest port for adjudication.⁶

Enroute the steamer was found to be unseaworthy and brought into St. Marks. Here Doughty left part of his command and made the remainder of the trip to Tampa Bay in the two small boats.

In the meantime Captain Francis S. Belton, USA, 2nd Artillery, commanding at Fort Brooke, requested aid from the naval forces at Pensacola. He reported that the bay area was infested with hostile Indians far more numerous than his small command. His problem was complicated by the six army transport vessels gathered at Tampa, none of them armed, to carry the Seminoles westward. More vessels were expected daily. The captain feared the Indians might encircle the bay, establish themselves on islands at the entrance, and possibly attack the transports. He requested a warship,

munitions, and some small boats to defend the public property at anchor within the bay, and the friendly Indian families who had been placed on some of the islands for protection from the hostiles. Belton's message, sent by the public schooner Motto on January 5, arrived at Pensacola twelve days later. The following day, in the absence of Commodore Dallas and in view of the emergency nature of this request, Captain William C. Bolton, USN, commander of the navy yard, ordered the Vandalia to Fort Brooke.

Captain Webb loaded three light field pieces for the army, brought on board last minute provisions, and cleared the bar at Pensacola on January 19. His departure was so expeditious that the officers of the Vandalia failed to receipt for the supplies delivered before her departure.⁷ He had to spend six days standing off Tampa Bay waiting for the heavy fog to clear. In spite of the rapidity with which Webb complied with his orders, he did not reach his anchorage off Gadsdens Point, about sixteen miles from Fort Brooke, until⁸ January 28.

The day the Vandalia sortied from Pensacola, Commodore Dallas, fearing for the safety of Fort Brooke, dispatched his marine force in a merchant brig sailing from Key West to Tampa. This detachment consisted of First Lieutenant Nathaniel S. Maldron, USMC, a surgeon, three officers, seven seamen, and fifty-seven marines.

At the same time, the commodore chartered the schooner Behama to send Lieutenant George M. Bache, USN, with a small party of seamen to reconstruct the lighthouse at Cape Florida. Bache's group arrived at Indian Key and found William Cooley, who volunteered to act as guide. He brought them to Cape Florida, also called Key Biscayne, on the morning of the twenty-fourth. The sailors barricaded the entrance and ground floor windows of the tower to protect the keepers left to maintain the light after they departed.⁹

These initial operations by the West India Squadron were impromptu tactical maneuvers in response to enemy actions either anticipated or actual. For the next three years, with a few exceptions, the squadron's reaction to the Indian hostilities continued to be tactical. Commodore Dallas and most of his commanding officers failed to develop a strategic plan for utilizing their forces most effectively against the Seminoles. The result was a series of actions by individual units responding to specific events without the unity of an overall strategy.

Shortly after the Vandalia anchored at Tampa Bay Major General Edmund P. Gaines arrived from New Orleans with a large detachment. Gaines informed Webb that he intended to take the field with all available forces, including the marines under Lieutenant Waldron. The citizens, friendly Indians, and military stores

were to be loaded aboard the transports anchored in the bay and left under the protection of the guns of the Vandalia.

While thus employed, Webb utilized the services of the revenue cutter Dexter to return the remainder of Lieutenant Doughty's expedition at St. Marks to Tampa Bay.¹⁰ The hostiles were moving to the west coast and southward to avoid Gaines's force in the field, and Colonel Lindsay requested a naval patrol to prevent such movement. The revenue cutter Washington, Captain Ezekiel Jones, was the only vessel readily available, but its crew was too few for such an assignment. Therefore, Webb dispatched Lieutenant William Smith, Assistant Surgeon Charles A. Haseler, and fifteen seamen to augment the cutter's crew. He ordered her captain to investigate a supposed Indian encampment near the mouth of the Manatee River.

The Washington departed immediately, picked up competent Indian guides from Captain Bunce's fishing rancho at the mouth of the bay, sailed to the Manatee, and anchored there on the same day.¹¹ Jones and Smith made a brief exploratory expedition before dark and found many tracks of the recent encampment. The next day the sailors and cuttermen marched ten miles into the interior before conceding the impossibility of establishing contact with the hostiles in the vicinity. This trek took them all day; the only useful information gathered was that the Indians appeared to be headed south.¹²

Webb, in the meantime, was preparing a small boat expedition to more thoroughly patrol the coast and rivers. On the afternoon of March 17, 1836, the normal routine of the Vandalia was interrupted by the boatswain's pipe calling away the ship's boat expedition. This was the culmination of a little over a day's preparation.¹³ Supervision of the provisioning was entrusted to Acting Sailing Master Stephen C. Rowan¹⁴ and Passed Midshipman William M. Walker, who were second and third in command of this expedition under Lieutenant Levin M. Powell.¹⁵ Outfitting such an expedition required planning, and Rowan requisitioned calking mallets, caulking irons, broad axe, jack plane, chisel, saw, spike gimblet, auger, topmaul, adze, and wood axes from the carpenter's department; muskets, a musket scraper, pistols, a pistol scraper, cartridges, flints, priming powder, bayonets, and cutlasses from the gunner's department; and 210 pounds pork, 210 pounds beef, six gallons beans, six gallons rice, three gallons molasses, two gallons vinegar, twenty-four gallons whiskey, and 4,500 pounds of bread from the purser. Meanwhile, Powell, after drawing two boat's compasses, a chart, and spy glass from the master's department, consulted with the captain and Lieutenant Doughty.¹⁶ Finally, when the preparations were completed, the sailors, attired in their white uniforms, blue collars, and straw hats fell in for muster and weapons check. Satisfied with his inspection,

Lieutenant Powell reported his departure to the officer of the deck, and a log entry was made noting the departure of two cutters for the mouth of the Manatee.¹⁷

Powell's specific orders were to "proceed to the examination of the river Manatee, the Mullet Keys and to cruise along the main coast North of Anclote Keys with a view to intercept the hostile Indians in their retreat coastwise."¹⁸ In other words, the navy was to perform a flanking and harassing action upon the Indians who were being driven southward along the west coast of Florida by the army. Enroute to the Manatee Powell boarded the Washington and passed Captain Jones additional orders to go south and investigate Charlotte Harbor. Powell and his men spent Friday, March 18, searching along both banks of the Manatee (to the head of boat navigation) but no Indians were sighted. The following day he sailed for Anclote Keys and arrived there on Monday. The sailors searched the area carefully and observed many signs of Indians, but from all indications these were old tracks and not of recent origin. This search took a little over two days after which on the twenty-fourth the expedition sailed south to investigate Mullet Keys. There the process of searching and exploring the area for signs of Indians was repeated, but again the results were negative. The weather had turned stormy, provisions were running low, no Indians had been found, and the discomfort

of living in an open boat prompted Powell to set sail for the Vandalia on the morning of March 27. The group arrived the following evening.

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Three days later the Washington returned from its inspection of Charlotte Harbor. Captain Jones reported that on March 28 and 29, while Smith was on a boat expedition examining the coast more closely, he sighted an Indian encampment at the mouth of the Mycoca River. Smith could count twenty-two Indians at this camp, and he could see many fires near by. Since it was obvious that the enemy were too numerous for his small party, he decided to send his two Indian guides to arrange a parley. No sooner had the two landed than they were met by a band of warriors. It was a tense moment until a brave recognized one of the guides. After that the two parties talked. The hostiles would have shot white men and were reluctant to give any information. On their return the scouts could only report that the warriors were belligerent, determined, and more numerous than Smith's force. There were no further encounters, and the Washington returned to Tampa.

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Meanwhile, shipboard rest for Powell and Rowan had been a very brief two days. They and Midshipman Lafayette Maynard were dispatched with arms and provisions for fifteen days, "to act against the Indians on the coast south of Tampa Bay."

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This was the result of a request from the new army commander in Florida, Major

General Winfield Scott, to Webb that he send revenue cutters or other naval vessels as could be mustered "to Charlotte harbour, with orders to take such position on those waters and so blockade the rivers of that country, as to cut off most effectually all retreat to, or commⁿ - with the Glades of the South."²²

Powell sailed for Charlotte Harbor with two boats - a launch and a cutter - containing forty officers and men. At the entrance to the bay they came upon two pirogues of fugitives from the fishing rancho at Josefa Island.²³ The refugees reported that on the previous evening their settlement had been attacked by a force of about twenty-five Indians led by Chief Wy-he-kee. The revenue collector's establishment had been destroyed and it was believed that the customs inspector had been killed. Some of the residents had fled in small boats; others had hidden the women and children in the woods to elude the Indians who plundered the settlement.

Lieutenant Powell immediately directed his group to the stricken village. On the way he picked up another boatload of fugitives. He urged the people in it to gather up the women and children hidden along the route while his force pushed on to meet the enemy. When the navy arrived at Josefa Island the marauders were encamped on a key a few miles away. After helping the civilians return to their homes, Bowen was dispatched with guides to investigate. The following morning, April 3, his

party came upon a small group of Seminoles just south of Charlotte Bay and engaged them in combat, killing two and taking two prisoner. The remainder of the expedition, in company with the cutter Dallas, arrived shortly afterward and the two captives were placed aboard the cutter for safekeeping. While Powell was making arrangements for his prisoners, Rowan, trailing another band of Indians, continued on to Sanibel Island, but made no contact with the enemy.

Powell maintained his boat patrols along the coast and around the keys searching for Indians. Meantime some of the residents of Charlotte Harbor found the body of Dr. H. B. Crews, the missing customs inspector, on a small island where he had gone to hunt. Powell immediately set a course for the scene of the murder. As he neared it he noticed an Indian canoe just off shore of an adjacent island and gave chase, but the natives were able to reach land before they could be overtaken. Powell ordered the sailors to open fire; one Indian was killed and the other gave himself up. A search of the canoe revealed some of Dr. Crews's personal effects. The Dallas was sighted, hailed, and received another prisoner.

In the meantime, the army, in three wings, had made a sweep through northern Florida without being able to find the main body of Indian warriors. Since early April, 1836, it had been gathered at Fort Brooke,

awaiting some intelligence of the enemy's whereabouts. The arrival of the Dallas brought information of Lieutenant Powell's brush with the Seminoles, but more important one of his prisoners confessed that the hostiles had concentrated their families and supplies inland from Charlotte Harbor near the headwaters of Pease Creek. ²⁷ General Scott ordered Colonel Persifor F. Smith and his Louisiana Volunteers to proceed by boat to Charlotte. Captain Webb instructed Powell to cooperate with this force. The Volunteers commenced embarking on the troop transports in the late afternoon of April 10. Smith, however, was anxious to meet Powell before his force departed from the area, and he left with his staff in two boats at nine that same evening.

The following morning, about twenty miles from Boca Grande, Colonel Smith met the navy expedition conveying the Josefa Island fishermen and their families to Tampa. The combined assault group headed south and arrived at Charlotte Harbor the next day. Powell, under Smith's orders took charge of the boat operations transporting the forces up the Myakka River as far as the depth of water would allow. Upon reaching the head of boat navigation, his group was incorporated into Smith's volunteer units, which marched up both banks of the river. There were signs of the recent passing of a small band of Indians and a deserted village but

no indications that the Seminoles had gathered in force. When Smith gave the order to proceed back to Tampa Bay, Powell returned also. He reported, on April 17, "We arrived last night after an absence of twenty-six days [he is evidently including his first boat expedition in his computations], and although greatly exposed in our open boats, and my people subjected to great hardship I am pleased to bear witness to the cheerfulness and industry which marked their conduct."²⁸

The Vandalia had greatly depleted her supplies while acting as the base for the revenue cutters and boat expeditions operating out of Tampa Bay. The sloop of war Concord was ordered to replace the Vandalia. When Master Commandant Mervine P. Mix brought the Concord to her anchorage off Gadsen's Point he found the volunteers embarking in transports to leave Florida, and the regulars preparing to go into summer quarters. (It was generally believed summer in Florida was the sickly season during which time military operations could not be conducted.) Fort Brooke's garrison was to be reduced to 200 or 300. Too few, Mix thought, to defend the post. The commanding general requested that the Concord remain in the bay and the West India Squadron's marines continue to help garrison Fort Brooke. Mix concurred and in his report to the commodore, stated he would periodically send a launch or other boats to cruise and protect the fisheries at the mouth of Tampa Bay.²⁹

Towards the end of the month Mix received a request from Governor Richard K. Call, who had replaced Eaton in March, 1836, for a naval vessel to be sent to Apalachicola to aid in preventing the Creeks of Alabama and Georgia from moving south and joining the Seminoles. The Concord had too deep a draft; thus the Washington was sent, after her crew was augmented by Lieutenant H. A. Adams with a party of sixty men from the Concord. She sortied on June 2, and anchored at St. Marks three days later. The Concord's detachment set out immediately for the defense of Tallahassee, but the expected attack did not materialize. The governor, however, asked Adams to conduct a survey of the coast from St. Marks to Tampa to aid future campaigns. Adams thought this request to be within the tenor of his orders and accepted the task. He returned to St. Marks to construct boats for such service with a carte blanche from the governor.

Shortly after this he received an urgent express from Call asking for immediate aid against 2,000 Creek warriors who were supposed to have crossed the Chattahoochee River on their way to Tallahassee. Adams returned to the ship, assembled his men expeditiously, and departed for the capital the same day. The sailors marched in company with an infantry detachment commanded by Major Sands. That night while the two detachments were camped they received another express to make haste, as the Creeks were but twelve miles from Tallahassee.

At first light the combined force was on the march. The day became very hot and the sailors, unused to marching, suffered greatly; many threw away their shoes. Within three miles of the capital, they learned the alarm had been false. Once more Call expressed his thanks and apologized for the urgent and unnecessary appeal for aid. Dallas later commented that the marches and countermarches were the result of "reports & alarms not duly enquired into."³⁰ He felt the Floridians were too sensitive to Indian hostilities to be objective on the subject.

Adams reported to the governor on June 19 that his term of service had expired and requested instructions. Call released Adams who left Tallahassee the next day. On the return trip one of the quarter gunners was accidentally left behind in the capital. The sailor departed alone and unarmed to follow his shipmates. On his way to St. Marks he was joined by an Indian armed with a rifle and a knife. At dusk the Indian helped erect a shelter against the rain and shared his meal of wild turkey. Afterwards, the gunner reported he had been too fatigued to worry about the danger of sleeping with his armed companion. At daylight the Seminole took his leave and disappeared into the woods. The sailor continued on to St. Marks where he rejoined the Washington just before she departed.

On March 17, a Spaniard arrived at Indian Key by canoe to trade. The citizens became suspicious of his actions and detained him. They learned he had two Indian companions hiding on another island about a mile away. A search party was formed immediately and sent out to bring them in. After some difficulty, both Indians were captured, brought back to the key, and placed in custody. The information obtained from them alarmed the citizens, for there was said to be a large number of hostiles gathered near Cape Sable, just twenty-eight miles from Indian Key. Naturally, the local people appealed to Commodore Dallas for protection, and he sent the Dexter, Captain Rudolph, to their aid.

When the cutter arrived the three prisoners were placed on board for safe keeping. The vessel remained from May 22 until June 17 when it had to leave for reprovisioning. The evening before she sailed the two Indians jumped over the side. One of them was shot and observed to sink; the other apparently made good his escape. The following morning the old Spaniard "being in a very bad state of health" died. 32
 Fearful that the escaped prisoner might return with others, the citizens sent another appeal to Dallas. Again the Dexter was sent to cruise the waters about Indian Key.

The schooner Hotto brought the information of the escape to Tampa. Mix also learned there was a

large supply of powder stored on Indian Key. Further, the brig Gil Blas had been wrecked at New River with thirty tons of lead on board. Both powder and lead should be kept from the enemy if at all possible. There were no navy vessels available to carry a party to Indian Key and it was too great a distance for open boats. He therefore made a requisition on Major Keney Wilson, now commanding at Fort Brooke, for the schooner Motto (which was under army contract) to transport his detachment.

The Motto left on June 7 with a small group of sailors and marines. Lieutenant Thomas J. Leib found there was not an excessive amount of powder stored on the key. At the Gil Blas, he examined the wreck closely, even dived into the water filled hold, but couldn't find any lead. Then the sailors set fire to the hulk. On leaving, the Motto rolled away her rudder breaking both gudgeons. The crew had to jury-rig a couple of sweeps over the stern, which delayed their departure until late in the afternoon. ³³

That evening they were within seven miles of Cape Florida and noticed that the lighthouse was on fire. At daybreak they attempted to beat up to the cape to investigate. By eleven the schooner had worked its way to Bear's Cut. Here Leib armed his detachment, hoisted out the boats, and headed for the light. An hour later he came upon a canoe drifting in the shoal waters. Next was a deserted sloop boat

loaded with plunder from the lighthouse. He took both prizes in tow. The current was against them and finally Leib had to destroy the canoe in order to reach the anchorage off the lighthouse during daylight hours. He left some men in the sloop boat to cover his landing. It was five in the afternoon before he reached the lighthouse where he found the keeper, John W. B. Thompson, on top of the tower badly burnt and wounded.

Thompson told Leib that on the previous day he and his Negro helper had been attacked by a band of fifty to sixty Indians. He had spotted the band as he was going from the house to the tower, and he had sprinted for the lighthouse yelling a warning to his companion to do likewise. The two men reached the building and barred the door just before the warriors arrived. Thompson stationed the Negro by the entrance while he took three guns to the second floor. From his vantage point he kept the warriors at bay until dark.

Many of the Seminole bullets punctured the oil tins stored in the tower. At dusk the first floor was saturated with oil and a fire broke out. Thompson and his helper retreated up the tower to escape the flames. They were forced to lie on the narrow ledge to avoid the rifle fire from below. The Negro was hit seven times, and he died. Miraculously Thompson

was only wounded in the ankles and feet. The flame shooting up the tower was more dangerous than the enemy rifles. The intense heat became intolerable. Finally in desperation, Thompson threw down a keg of gun powder in the hopes the explosion would end his misery. The blast shook the tower, but did not kill him. Next he decided to dive head first over the rail, but "something dictated to me to return and lay down again; I did so, and in two minutes the fire fell to the bottom of the house."³⁴ Thompson continued to lie motionless and eventually convinced the Indians he was dead. The next morning he watched them load his sloop boat with their plunder and depart.

Leib and his men tried to get Thompson down from his perch ninety feet above the ground, but to no avail. At dark they had to leave him and return to the Motto. The sailors made kites that night, and early the next morning were back at the tower to try again, but without success. Eventually they shot a ramrod, with twine attached, from one of the guns up to the perch. Thompson was then able to haul up heavier line. On it two sailors climbed up to the ledge, rigged a sling, and hoisted the wounded man down to the waiting rescuers. Thompson was taken to Key West and placed in the hospital. When the schooner left in August, he was recuperating nicely.³⁵

While Captain Mix waited for Leib to return,

the ship's provisions dropped to a very low level. After consulting with the crew, he cut the daily bread ration to nine ounces per man. Under these circumstances the Concord could remain at Tampa until the first week in August. During this time the crew began to show symptoms of scorbuti brought on by the lack of "fresh meat and vegetables but once in 148 days." To arrest this affliction Mix frequently sent large parties of fifty to sixty men to the shore "for bathing and amusement," and he increased the standards of cleanliness aboard ship. Finally, it was necessary to return to Pensacola. The Concord departed Tampa on the same day that Leib left Key West, and when she arrived at the navy yard sixteen crewmen were on the binnacle list for scorbuti.³⁶

The Concord sent out many small boat parties, in addition to Adams and Leib's expeditions, during April through July. Passed Midshipman Bartlett and Sailing Master J. P. McKinstry made a thorough survey of the coast around the Withlacoochee. These activities "probably kept the Enemy in check, as no acts of hostility have been committed by him since the massacre of Doct. Crews & his party at Charlotte Harbour."³⁷

The War Department chartered steamboats in the spring of 1836, for the campaign against the Creek Indians then on the war-path in Alabama and Georgia, and Commodore Dallas was called upon to supply crews.

The first steamer to arrive at Pensacola was the American. Lieutenant Stephen Johnston, USN, was given command of her and provided with a crew of fifty sailors. The engineers, carpenter, and firemen, however, were civilians contracted for when the vessel was procured in New Orleans. The next to arrive was the Southron; she was renamed the Major Dade,³⁸ Lieutenant Neil M. Howison, USN, commanding. The third and final vessel was the Yalla Busha, which was called the Lieutenant Izard. Lieutenant George M. Bache, USN, received this command. During the period between June 19 and July 17, 1836, these vessels were dispatched to the Chattahoochee River to cooperate with General Scott, who had been shifted from the Seminole to the Creek theater.³⁹

Scott's plans had changed by the time the three vessels rendezvoused. The general kept the Lieutenant Izard to transport his troops and supplies, and sent the other two to Apalachicola, Florida.

While operating with Scott, the only action Bache reported concerned the sailors liberty: "The crew of the Izard have been healthy and appear to be contented and happy. The neighbourhood of Columbus however is a very bad place for Sailors, we cannot anchor in the Channel on account of interfering with the other Boats and are obliged to make fast along-side the bank; There is a free Bridge across the River

and a place called Sodom on the opposite side in the extreme of Alabama where the arm of the law is not very powerful." ⁴⁰

Governor Call had been placed in supreme command of the military throughout the territory. He was preparing for an assault upon the Indian stronghold in the Cove of the Withlacoochee. All three steamboats were operating in Florida under Call's direction by mid-August and they were detailed to bring supplies up the Suwannee River in preparation for this campaign. Little enemy action took place. Eight Indian rafts were found, but no warriors. On one occasion, while steaming between St. Marks and Camp Call at Suwannee Old Town, the American came upon and chased some Indians in a canoe. The Seminoles managed to escape in shoal water, but lost their canoe and equipment to the sailors.

In late summer sickness struck the crew of the Major Dade. "It is a violent sort of fever," Lieutenant Howison reported, "and doubtless acquired by working hard and exposure to the sun, while engaged lugging sacks of corn and oats on board, from warehouses near the wharf - drinking the bad water of the river too may have assisted. The fact however is incontestably established that no white man can labour in the midday sunshine of this climate and be healthy in summer." Howison then continued with the familiar refrain of the overworked and underpaid serviceman, and a barb

directed at the army. "The inhabitants of the country at this season abandon it," he wrote, "and even negroes can with great difficulty be procured at an expense of from three to five dollars a day, while the obedient man of war Sailor for \$12 the month, must bear the burden of the public service, and lug along forage for the army, which is snugly encamped near cool springs and shady trees awaiting the agreeable weather of Autumn to begin its labours."⁴¹ He returned to Pensacola due to the condition of his crew.

Lieutenant Johnston reported in early October that the American was in St. Joseph with a broken main shaft. He sent his men to Pensacola to recuperate from the effects of shipboard sickness.

The Lieutenant Izard had the same problem; Bache was among the victims, and he had to be relieved by Lieutenant Raphael Semmes. The governor called upon Semmes to remain, for it was imperative he have one steamer to establish a depot on the Withlacoochee for his coming operations. Semmes consented, although he had to accept a draft of militiamen to complete his crew.

Semmes departed Camp Call on October 2, with General Leigh Read of the Florida militia and his command on board, bound for the Withlacoochee. The Izard had to remain six to eight miles off the mouth of the river until the channel could be found. "The

Channel hence to the River itself is exceedingly shoal & intricate," Lieutenant Semmes wrote, "so much so, that it is barely possible that a vessel of the Iizard's draught of water, can enter the river at all. Genl Read however, being anxious that I should enter, & being convinced myself that such an event would have a good effect upon the Indians, I laboured with great zeal to find a channel, & commenced warping the Iizard into it.⁴² The tide here runs with great velocity & rises three or four feet. That part of the channel into which I had warped, was surrounded with small oyster banks, and the Iizard having swung upon two of them, was left in this situation by the tide, & being greatly weakened & wrecked by her previous hard service, gave way amidships, filled with water and sunk. She is so completely a wreck that I shall abandon her so soon as I can remove her engine & stores & return to Pensacola with my officers & men by the first opportunity; . . ."⁴³

Semmes felt the steamer's loss had little effect upon Read's operations, because the general still had a large barge with which to carry his supplies up river. However, Read failed to establish his depot on time. This caused Call's main force to have to divert to Fort Drane, which disrupted the campaign.

Governor Call laid the blame for the loss of the Lieutenant Iizard solely on the arrangement by the

government to utilize naval officers who, he felt, had no experience or training for navigating in restricted river waters. Semmes, on the other hand, gave much of the blame for his loss to the crew of raw militia which had been recently recruited for the mission. These charges and countercharges eventually led to Semmes requesting a Court of Inquiry, but the Navy Department felt such action was not necessary.⁴⁴

By November, 1836, the American and Major Dade were back operating with the military in Florida. These two vessels continued to provide transportation and carry supplies for the army throughout the first eight months of 1837.

Commodore Dallas took the complaints of his officers assigned to steamboat duty very seriously. When Lieutenant Howison complained to him of the sickness of his crew and of the excessive work assigned, Dallas wrote back immediately that Howison was free to return to Pensacola anytime he felt it was necessary to do so for the crew's health, and this action could be taken "without consulting anyone." Further, Howison was to inform the governor that while the steamers were available to transport provisions and men wherever he desired, the sailors were not to be used to load supplies unless the troops were similarly employed. This attitude greatly impeded cooperation between the military and steamer forces. By August of the following

year the army decided to resume complete control over
the steamboats and made a request to do so to the navy.
In October the transfer was complete.⁴⁵

CHAPTER 3

THE COMMODORE

Commodore Alexander J. Dallas had an excellent background for command of the West India Squadron. (The title of commodore was honorific and bestowed upon naval officers performing duties normally calling for an officer of flag rank; at this time, however, captain was the highest rank in the United States Navy.) He entered the navy as a midshipman on November 22, 1805, when only fourteen years old. A lieutenant during the War of 1812, he served under both Commodores John Rodgers and Oliver Hazard Perry. He commanded the twelve gun schooner Spitfire in the Mediterranean Squadron under Commodore Stephen Decatur in 1815. As a master commandant, he captained the John Adams, participating in the expedition under Commodore David Porter to suppress the West Indian pirates in 1824. Appointed captain in 1828, Dallas was ordered to establish the navy yard at Pensacola, Florida. On July 16, 1835, he assumed command of the West India Squadron. He brought to his command a knowledge of the territory of Florida, a background of ship operations in that area, and thirty-one years' naval experience.¹ The

latter attribute made him especially zealous to preserve his and the navy's honor in all dealings with military or civilian authorities.

The first news Dallas had of the outbreak of hostilities was a letter from William A. Whitehead, collector of customs at Key West. "Most painful intelligence has been received to day from the Main land," he wrote, "of the massacre of the Company U. S. Troops with all their officers, while marching from Tampa Bay to Fort King. - Intelligence has also been received that the Indians in the vicinity of Cape Florida have likewise massacred a family on the Coast and that the Inhabitants of all the Settlements in that vicinity are moving down towards Key West." ² This reached him on the evening of January 12 at Havana, Cuba, where the frigate Constellation, the squadron's flagship, and the sloop of war St. Louis were anchored. Although short of provisions, he sortied at the first light in company with the St. Louis. The Constellation barely cleared the reef on its approach to Key West. Once there Dallas decided to remain and aid the inhabitants. He sent Master Commandant Lawrence Rousseau of the St. Louis to Pensacola for supplies and with instructions to order the sloop of war Vandalia or the schooner Grampus, should either be at Pensacola, to sail for Tampa Bay to aid the military. ³ Fearing for the safety of the forces at Fort Brooke, Dallas

dispatched his marine detachment, under the command of First Lieutenant Waldron in a merchant brig which sailed from Key West on January 17. He also chartered the schooner Bahama for Lieutenant Bache's small party of seamen sent to reconstruct the lighthouse at Cape Florida. Later he requested permission from the Navy Department to charter a few small draft vessels for direct support of the military.⁴

When he felt that his services at Key West were no longer needed, he departed for Pensacola. His most immediate task was to find replacements for the sailors whose term of service had expired, or would expire within the next few months. By mid-February, Dallas needed about 150 men to bring the squadron up to strength. He informed the secretary of the navy that he was going to send an officer to New Orleans to recruit. On April 3, he reported that these efforts had been unsuccessful. A month previous, the commodore issued instructions to the squadron's officers that he would not accept their applications for leave of absence, except under most unusual circumstances. He requested that the department take no notice of any request which did not have his approval.⁵

The first week of April Dallas had to supply the St. Louis with thirty men from the Constellation before she could depart for a Mexican cruise. The trouble between Mexico and Texas made it mandatory

that the St. Louis have a full crew prepared to protect American commerce in the gulf.

The Navy Department sent additional vessels to the squadron upon the outbreak of hostilities, including some revenue cutters borrowed from the Treasury Department. Early in April Dallas reported the arrival of the sloop of war Concord after a voyage from the north which included stops at Havana, Key West, and Tampa Bay. "Like most of our vessels coming from the North," he commented, "she requires repairs." On the same day the revenue cutter Washington arrived at Pensacola for duty with the West India Squadron. "But," Dallas wrote, "as represented by her Commander, unfit for service, without repairs and supplies of arms, ammunition, men, &c, &c." Later, on April 20, the revenue cutter Jefferson anchored at Pensacola to officially join the squadron. By the end of the month the revenue cutter Dexter had also reported in. She brought letters from Lieutenant Waldron on the activities of the marine detachment at Fort Brooke. In March they had been in the interior under Colonel Lindsay, had engaged in several skirmishes without suffering any losses, and had returned to the Fort on April 4, suffering from fatigue and exposure.

Commodore Dallas informed the secretary of the navy that the activities of the West India Squadron were so varied and widely scattered throughout the

Caribbean and the Gulf of Mexico that he would remain at Pensacola where he could exercise more efficient control over the squadron than at any other place. Ships going to Mexico or the coasts of Florida could be augmented by crews from his flagship, and he was centrally located to receive dispatches from all points. At the time of his writing, the crew of the Constellation was depleted by one third, and she was unable to get underway except in the direst emergency.⁹

From the very outbreak of Indian Hostilities there had been a conviction among military commanders that the Seminoles were receiving munitions of war from foreign sources. Cuban and Bahaman fishing vessels were especially suspect. On January 21, 1836, Dickerson passed on to Dallas the opinion which Governor Eaton had sent to the War Department that Spanish fishing vessels were engaged in munitions trade with the Indians.¹⁰ The War Department continually requested naval action to prevent the supposed trade with the hostile Indians, but was never satisfied that the navy was taking effective measures.

Commodore Dallas was well aware of the possibility of arms smuggling and continually issued instructions to prevent such traffic. In June, 1836, the revenue cutter Jefferson was ordered to "cruise on the Coast of Florida in the neighbourhood of Charlotte's Harbour & Tampa, with the view of preventing the

introduction of supplies to the Indians and the exportation of slaves and property taken by them to Cuba or elsewhere."¹¹ Earlier, in March, when the Washington reported to Master Commandant Webb for instructions she was ordered "to Cruise along the Coast, from the Anclote Keys to Charlotte Harbour with instructions to board and intercept all vessels that may be found with supplies for the enemy and bring them to this place for further instructions."¹²

In October of the following year, Dallas ordered the Jefferson to cruise between Indian Key, Key West, and Tampa Bay.¹³ That same month he ordered the schooner Grampus to "sail for Havana, thence to Nassau, (New Providence) with directions to ascertain if from either of those points munitions of war are supplied to the Indians in Florida."¹⁴ After that she was to cruise between Cuba and Florida to stop any illicit traffic.

In the third year of the war Dallas was still issuing such instructions. "You will proceed immediately with the U. S. Ship Boston under your command to Tampa Bay," he told Commander Edward B. Babbitt, "communicate with the commanding officer of the forces there, obtaining every information that he may think proper to give, for the purpose of your rendering every aid in your power to prevent the introduction of munitions of war, into Florida, for the use of the

Indians. - On leaving Tampa," he continued, "you will cruise on the Coast of Florida, say from the Tortugas as far as Cape Florida, boarding all vessels that you may fall in with and particularly by examining fishing smacks and other small craft, as it is by this means that (as it is supposed) powder & lead are introduced among the Indians."¹⁵ Yet at no time did the army seem confident that such traffic had been stopped.

The Florida conflict was only one of many responsibilities assigned to the West India Squadron. The merchants at Portsmouth, New Hampshire, requested protection from acts of piracy off the Haitian coasts in February, 1836, and Dallas had to direct some of the squadron's vessels into these waters.¹⁶ A more serious area was the Gulf of Mexico where Texas was engaged in a struggle for its freedom from Mexico. Among the activities in that quarter, the Warren captured the schooner Invincible, sailing under Texan colors, off the mouth of the Mississippi on April 29, 1836.¹⁷

The President ordered the squadron to divert all aid possible to keep the Creek Indian uprising in Georgia and Alabama from merging into the Seminole War in Florida. Specifically, Commodore Dallas was instructed to man three steamers provided by the army.¹⁸ Thus in answer to an earlier letter from Dickerson asking that the revenue cutters be turned back to the

Treasury Department at an early date, Dallas replied: "There has been no time since their being under my direction that they have been more wanted than at this moment. I shall therefore continue to employ them until I shall receive your further instructions. - The Indians are up, and doing, with no force in the land to prevent them from, at any time taking to the water in their Canoes, and doing great injury to those inhabiting the Islands along the coast of Florida. I am satisfied that the active manner in which the Cutters have been employed does not suit the taste of some of their Commanders, but this I can not help. The Commander of the Washington makes sundry complaints about men &c, all of which, I have done away with, by giving him a crew from this Ship (temporarily) - If the Cutters are continued in my command and this Gentleman is not more on the alert, I shall suspend him from his Command and put one of my Lieut: on board. . . ."

In addition to the official requests for the squadron's services, Dallas received many petitions from local communities for naval protection. The Jefferson, recently returned from Mexico, was ordered to St. Josephs at the request of that town's mayor and aldermen. Captain Jackson was instructed to remain there as long as necessary, and then to cruise between Charlotte Harbor and Tampa Bay on blockade

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duty. Earlier the commodore answered an appeal from Captain Jacob Housman and the citizens of Indian Key for naval protection from hostiles supposedly gathered on the mainland near Cape Sable.²¹

The military command in Florida was poorly defined during the early months of the war and this too added to Dallas's problems. Initially General Duncan L. Clinch had been placed in military command of the territory during the preliminary stages of the Indian migration. However, the War Department had divided the nation into army areas such that Florida was split into the eastern and western sectors; therefore, there were two additional military commanders concerned when the hostilities commenced, General Edmund P. Gaines in the west, and General Winfield Scott in the east. These two men were personally and professionally at odds. General Scott was appointed the overall military commander in Florida in January, 1836. General Gaines left New Orleans for Tampa just as soon as he heard of the Indian uprising, and before he had been informed of Scott's assignment. For a brief period of time all three generals were in the field simultaneously.

The confusion over military commanders did not much disrupt naval operations. All three leaders desired the navy to patrol and blockade the coast and thwart Seminole movements through harassing missions

by small boat expeditions. The Washington, Dexter,
and Jefferson were initially transferred to the West
India Squadron to cooperate with General Clinch,
although technically they were under Dallas's command. ²²

Later, the Secretary of War Lewis Cass requested Dickerson
to instruct the cutters to receive their orders from
Scott. "Allow me also to suggest," added Cass, "the
propriety of your authorising Commodore Dallas, with
the Squadron under his command, to cooperate with
General Scott in the subjugation and removal of the
hostile Indians. I do not, of course, mean to ask
that Commodore Dallas should, in any manner, receive
the orders of General Scott, or be accountable to him;
but that he may be empowered to act in the same service,
and requested to communicate freely with General Scott." ²³
Such request was immediately passed on to the commodore.

The man to profit most from the confused
situation was the newly appointed governor, Richard
Keith Call. He desired to lead the military forces
as well as be the executive head of the territory.
Call's letters to his friend President Andrew Jackson
eventually brought results. By June, 1836, General
Clinch had retired because of the slight he felt he
had received when Scott replaced him. Gaines was
stationed on the Texas border, and Scott was in Georgia
suppressing the Creek Indians. Thus in one of the

rare instances in our military history, the theater commander was a civilian who did not hold a regular commission.

Call was particularly sensitive to any breath of affront, yet in his dealings with others he was often arrogant. His method of demanding rather than requesting naval aid was greatly resented by Commodore Dallas, who at all times expected to be treated as becomes the senior naval officer of a theater. Thus it was inevitable that these two men should develop an animosity towards each other.

Call's plan was to utilize the Withlacoochee River to bring up men and supplies for an attack upon the Indian stronghold at the Cove of the Withlacoochee. Other groups were to approach from the interior. In order to carry out this operation, he desired the navy to survey the mouth of the river, and prevent supplies from reaching the Seminoles. He was convinced that the navy was not providing an effective blockade. He wrote to Dallas in May, prior to his military appointment, stating his belief that Spanish fishermen were operating in close cooperation with the Seminoles. "I have to request that the Small Cruisers under your command and the Revenue Cutters may be constantly employed on the Coast with orders to cut off all communication between the Indians and foreigners,"²⁴ The governor was demanding nothing which had not been

foreseen or ordered executed by Dallas before his request. Therefore, it seemed to the commodore that the governor was calling his professional abilities into question, as well as trying to bring him within the army chain of command.

Dallas received Call's letter at the time when one of the governor's military aides was visiting Pensacola. He told the Aide that he did not like the "Style of Command" in the letter and would not answer such a communication. Dallas went on to say that although he had cooperated in the past, and would continue to do so in the future, he would not give up command of his forces except under specific instructions from Washington.
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The governor continued this exchange a month later: "On the 26th of May I made a request of you in my official capacity which appears to have received no attention whatever. Were I disposed to regard Etiquette more than duty I should not again trouble you, but this I am not permitted to do under my instructions from the War Department, even if it were my disposition, I have therefore to request that a competent officer and crew may be ordered from the Squadron under your command to make a survey of the coast between the Bay of Tampa and the Mouth of the Withlacoochee river. This survey will be highly important in the contemplated expedition against the Indians. . . . The vessel

employed in that service should be of light draught and well furnished with Boats, capable of being fortified.²⁶"

This brought forth a reply from Dallas. "It is not my intention to cavil," he wrote, "or in any manner place obstacles in the way to a full and perfect co-operation of the naval force under my command with any force that may be engaged against the Seminole Indians or others, . . . previously to receipt of your letter of 26th May [I] had distributed along the Seaboard of Florida and Northern Coast of Cuba the different vessels of the Squadron with directions to examine and prevent any supplies from reaching the Indians or any captured property being taken from the territory. All vessels now on that coast have similar instructions. Up to the present moment, I flatter myself, nothing has been neglected or left undone that could in any way give effect to the movements of the military forces in Florida." Commodore Dallas, who could be as imperious as the governor, continued: "This explanation of what has been done is given not that I feel in the least called upon to make it but out of courtesy to your situation as Governor of the Territory and the high considerations which I entertain for you as a Gentleman." Then continuing in a more pleasant vein Dallas said he would enclose extracts of letters he had received

of a partial survey of the entrance to the Amiura [sic] River. He informed Call that a cutter had been cruising from Ancolote Keys to Charlotte Harbor during February and March on blockade duty, and as soon as a vessel was available, he would continue the survey. "I must in conclusion," Dallas told Call, "be permitted to say that I shall be most happy to communicate with you in any manner most agreeable to yourself for the full advancement of the objects of the present campaign . . . but in your communications I beg that for the future your suggestions may bear less the character of orders than those theretofore received. . . . I hope the Etiquette I have been found wanting in (not intention-ally) may not be lost sight of in any future [sic] communications that it may become necessary to make to me as Commanding Officer of the Squadron acting in the West Indies and Gulf of Mexico." Then, as a final warning, Dallas continued, "the orders and instructions I have received shall literally and liberally be construed and executed, but I can not receive orders from any one but the head of the Department from whom all my instructions are derived and under whose direction²⁷ I am, and shall continue to act."

Dallas sent this correspondence between himself and Governor Call to the secretary of the navy. "I mean not to be fastidious in the exercise of my command," he wrote Dickerson, "but I shall require all the

Courtesy of Language in any communication that may be made to me from the military officers in Command, that my rank and a service of thirty years entitle me to,"²⁸

The secretary replied: "The views which you have expressed, and the principles regulating your conduct as Commander of the U. S. Naval force, are strictly correct." Then in an attempt to smooth ruffled feelings he wrote, "It is not doubted that you and Governor Call, are both actuated by pure and patriotic motives, and that you will still cordially, and zealously preserve, in all measures of cooperation, calculated to advance the public interest, to secure harmony of action, and bring the War to a speedy and honourable issue."²⁹

Three days after sending the letter complaining of the governor's conduct, Dallas received the exchange between Captain Mix of the Concord and Major Keney Wilson, commanding at Fort Brooke. This occasioned another protest.

The commodore had written to Mix on May 18: "When in your opinion your services in co-operating with the Army in Florida will no longer be available, give an order to Lieut Waldron Commanding the Detachment of Marines at Fort Brooke to rejoin [sic] repair on board with them; . . ."³⁰ Later in the month Mix felt that the naval forces were no longer necessary at Tampa Bay, and he wrote to Wilson: "I wish Lieut

Waldron to be prepared to embark. . . . Will you be pleased to direct Lieut. Waldron to repair on board this Ship . . . he will return to the Fort by the Cutter Washington after I shall have had an interview with him."

³¹ Mix waited two days before writing a second time. "Your reasons are," he told Wilson, "no doubt, fully sufficient for detaining the marines, but as they are unknown to me and as the Commander in Chief of the Naval forces required their services, you will see the propriety of my request that I may communicate a copy to him."

³² Wilson replied: "I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letters of the 26th and 28th inst. and must apologize for not having made an earlier reply to the former; but as you did not then present the alternative which would lead you to apply for the Marine force at this Post I did not consider a specific reply necessary. I presume that you have heretofore been advised of the authority by which the Marines, under Lieut. Waldron, are detained at this Post. - I am directed to retain them here until the force shall be augmented by recruits or otherwise, and I cannot now admit the right of the Commander in Chief of the Naval forces of the United States in the West Indies to transfer to you the discretionary power of removal. The Marine force is still considered by me as a very essential part of this command, and I should not feel

authorized to remove them without further instructions than those now in my possession."³³

Dallas wrote to Dickerson, when he forwarded this correspondence to the Department, that "I never had any idea of withdrawing the Marines from Fort Brooke until their place could be supplied by troops properly belonging to such service; but I do contend, that belonging to the Squadron under my command and as they originally proceeded to the relief of Fort Brooke by my order, that they are still under my control and that I have a right to remove them to their appropriate station a board of this ship, whenever I think proper."³⁴

Dickerson brought this to the War Department. By the end of the month the secretary wrote back: "I have now the pleasure to enclose for your information copy of the order issued on the subject by General Jones Adjutant Gen^l of the U. S. Army, which will, it is not doubted, prove entirely satisfactory to you."³⁵

In spite of much command bickering there was usually cooperation. At the height of the army's winter campaign season, Dallas offered to man some of the army posts so that the soldiers could take the field with maximum strength. General Thomas S. Jesup, now commanding in Florida, accepted, and sailors and marines garrisoned Forts Clinch, Foster, and Brooke.³⁶

At the beginning of the next season, in the fall of 1837, the commodore felt the naval efforts had been slighted. He felt that Jesup had not sufficiently appreciated all the navy was doing. "It will afford me pleasure," he wrote Dickerson, "to do all in my power to aid General Jesup in his operations in Florida. I fear however that the same degree of alacrity cannot be expected from the navy as was exhibited during last winter. Lieuts. Johnston, Powell and Hunter rendered every service that could be asked from them, indeed more than could be fairly expected, nevertheless no mention of their services in the many, very many General Orders, lauding the merits, bravery, gallantry, perseverance etc. of volunteers, militia and regular forces engaged in the War in Florida." ³⁷

Early in October, 1836, Dallas summarized the squadron's movements in a report to the department. The Concord, Boston, and Natchez were cruising in rotation covering the Texas-Mexican coasts. The St. Louis was enroute to Tampa to relieve the Warren. The latter was to take the sick and disabled of the squadron to Norfolk. The Crampus would cruise to Windward as far as Haiti. The Vandalia and Washington had sortied with a large expedition led by Lieutenant Powell to bring the war to the Seminoles believed gathered in the Everglades. "Enclosed," Dallas

concluded, "you will find a copy of a letter from the Governor of Florida, the first I have been honored with, which gives any detail of his intention or movement." Then in a rather smug tone he continued, "I am happy to say, that previous to its receipt all my plans had been laid and orders given. You will perceive that they are in unison with his views and suggestions."³⁸ (Call was recommending that a naval party scout the Everglades.) Generally, as noted above, Dallas addressed Call, in his correspondence, by his official title "The Governor of Florida" omitting his name.

Dallas applied standard naval techniques against the Indians. The blockade instructions were routine orders, point to point cruising, and the sloops of war sailed well off shore because of their draft. Such an effort might be effective against a people who depended upon their overseas commerce for their well-being, but the Seminoles were self-sufficient, except for their weapons and powder. These two items could be brought to the Indians in small coastal vessels at innumerable points along the peninsula without the necessity of seaports. To guard against this illicit traffic would require extensive surveillance close to shore. This Dallas failed to do, although on several occasions he requested small craft to work close to land.

The boat expeditions were also, for the most part, organized along naval lines. They were tactical

maneuvers reacting to specific threats made by the Indians. The personnel manning these expeditions were not equipped or prepared for sustained operations on both land and water. These expeditions were designed for coastal and river operations from the boats.

There is another consideration. Dallas could not devote his full time to the Seminoles, nor could he set aside a permanent force to concentrate upon the Florida War. His ships were spread too thin to exert strong pressure upon the Indians which undoubtedly accounted for the lack of special effort on the part of the West India Squadron to cope with the enemy under any but standard naval methods.

Until the army forced the Seminoles into the Everglades there was no special reason for the navy to become much involved in the conflict. In spite of Dallas's efforts at blockade, the War Department was not satisfied that the munitions traffic with the hostiles had been closed. It was aware of the inadequacy of the navy's performance, and it tried to adopt new solutions. As the Seminoles moved south into the Everglades, the army was the first to realize the importance of naval forces working close to shore in harmony with the land forces. The Everglades provided the terrain for riverine warfare. Its coastline, indented and island studded, was small enough to be kept under close surveillance, and its unexplored interior could be reached only by boat or canoe.

Figure 3. The Everglades

This map is from the collection of military maps of the Second Seminole War held in the P. K. Yonge Library of Florida History, Gainesville, Florida. Although it is not catalogued as to its originator, some of the place names are of the officers of the Navy's Florida Expedition, and it was probably drawn at Lieutenant McLaughlin's request.

CHAPTER 4

THE FIRST ATTEMPT

The winter campaign of 1836-1837 began for Lieutenant Powell on the morning of October 2, 1836, when the Vandalia, accompanied by the revenue cutter Washington, sortied from Pensacola Bay and headed for Key West. This small force carried all of the marines of the squadron's ships then in the Gulf of Mexico, except for the St. Louis' detachment. It was to augment the navy's seamen and provide a strike force capable of dealing with a group of Indians, believed to number about 200, gathered in the vicinity of Cape Florida or New River. This had been determined when, prior to leaving Tampa the previous July, Captain Mix sent two Indians from Bunco's rancho to the mainland to spy. They fell in with Chief Alligator's party and learned that a large number of Seminoles had built canoes with which to take their families to the islands in the Everglades.¹

Now enroute to Key West, Powell and Commander Thomas Grebb, the Vandalia's new commanding officer, sketched the broad outline of the forthcoming operation. It had been reported that the Indians harvested coconuts (arrow-root), a substance they used to make bread, in this locality before moving northward.² It might be possible,

it was surmised, to surprise a large number of warriors before they took to the war-path; or, failing that, to deprive the hostiles of one of their basic foodstuffs and let hunger and starvation take their toll. The plan called for the Washington to transport boats and personnel from Key West to Cape Florida and to continue to act as the supply base for the ensuing operations. This assault force was larger than Powell's earlier expeditions and was tailored for the mission. In addition to the mobile support base provided by the revenue cutter, the detachment's fifty sailors, led by Lieutenant William Smith of the Vandalia, manned two schooner boats, the Carolina and the Firefly, and six smaller craft. First Lieutenant Waldron, USMC, from the frigate Constellation, commanded the ninety-five marines assigned. The medical duties were performed by the Vandalia's surgeon Charles A. Hassler who was assisted by a civilian volunteer, Dr. E. Frederick Leitner.³ Furthermore,⁴ Powell had the services of Mr. Stephen R. Mallory a resident of Key West who had experience sailing the waters of the Keys.

Powell left Key West October 3, 1836, and three days later, enroute to Cape Florida, he brought his force into Indian Key, one of the small islands just off the southern tip of the mainland, to replenish his water supply. Earlier, on October 5, a force of some seventy Indians had attacked Key Largo, destroying the garden and out-buildings belonging to Captain John Walton.⁵ On October 8, the Indians

attacked the schooner Mary, a small coastal vessel of about fifteen tons, while she was riding at anchor at Key Tavernier, just off the eastern shore of Key Largo. The five crew members managed to escape by taking to the small boats, although two of the men were wounded in the fray. The Indians first plundered the schooner and then set her afire. This war party was in no haste and remained in the vicinity for several days.⁶ Seeing the smoke from their campfires, about thirty miles away, Powell changed his plans and decided to make a surprise assault on the band before proceeding to the Cape. He recalled his earlier difficulties maneuvering the large navy launches close to the shoreline while attempting to approach guerrilla bands undetected and so he procured two light boats, one from Captain Jacob Housman of Indian Key,⁷ to augment his four smallest boats for his first attack upon the enemy.

His plan of operation was a pincer movement. Lieutenant Smith was to take a division of boats and circle the east end of Key Largo while Powell's group would stretch over the main under cover of darkness and try to stay hidden near the coast. Powell hoped the Indians would be traveling by water, and, not expecting a trap, they might move out away from the shore. He felt confident that he could force an engagement on the water if he could maneuver his sailors and marines between the Seminoles and land; this would be combat in the navy's element. Powell waited until the day was well along before deciding that the enemy

unfortunately was not going to travel out upon open water. He ordered the force to proceed along the coast and try to flush the hostiles out. Shortly thereafter they came upon a canoe carrying two Indians and the chase was on. The Seminoles were able to prolong the pursuit by remaining in the shallow waters, but Powell urged his sailors on and the gap narrowed. Just as Powell ordered some of his men to open fire, the canoe turned into the shore and its occupants jumped out and fled inland. Only then did Powell realize that the two Indians would spread the alarm, and by the time he arrived the whole Seminole force had vanished. The Indians had left their canoes, fishing equipment, and provisions behind, and before Powell returned to Indian Key he destroyed everything that he thought had any value. Once again the force resumed its course for Cape Florida.

After such an auspicious start, Powell was determined to examine the coast thoroughly. Lieutenant Smith was placed in charge of the large boats, and he was instructed to take the outer passage to the Cape, while First Lieutenant Waldron and his marines accompanied Powell in the small boats and searched the passage between Key Largo and the mainland. While Powell probed the innumerable inlets and small keys which could have furnished a secluded retreat for the enemy he was concerned about the possibility of an ambush. Added to this hazard, nature took a hand and the force had to boat against a northeast gale.

As a result it was October 21 before it reached Cape Florida. From this base Powell dispatched exploring parties to seek out the enemy. The first evening he sent Lieutenant Smith to the Miami River to inspect the former settlement there. The next night, October 22, Waldron took a large group up that river to the head of boat navigation. He reported that the settlements there had been utterly destroyed some time before his arrival. These movements were carried out at night to elude detection. Powell was trying to engage an elusive guerrilla foe and did not want the Seminoles to disappear again. Methodically he widened his search, sending Stephen Mallory to explore along Little River and Arch Creek, but with no positive results. Powell was convinced that there were no hostiles in the immediate vicinity, and he believed that they were somewhere along New River probably harvesting coontie. He was determined to surprise them.

The pincer movement would again become Powell's modus operandi. Accompanied by the marines, he would ascend to the headwaters of the Batones River and then march overland to New River. In the meantime, Lieutenant Smith was to approach by sea. Powell departed at nine in the evening and his group rowed all night, arriving at the Batones at ten the next morning, a distance of twenty-five miles from Cape Florida. On the march overland they came across a deserted Indian village and set fire to the dwellings. Powell reached New River about eight miles

below the Everglades and proceeded downstream until a junction was made with the boat force from the sea on October 30. Neither group had found any Seminoles. Therefore, Powell established a strong camp on the west bank of New River and again sent out probing expeditions. Smith was dispatched with three barges to operate as far north as Indian River. Meanwhile, knowing that the area to the south was clear of guerrilla units, Powell decided to investigate the Everglades, the terra incognita of the Seminoles.

Powell started out with four of his lightest boats and a scanty allowance of provisions so as not to be burdened. The party included Drs. Hassler and Leitner, who were interested in scientific information, and William Cooley the guide. By this trek Powell hoped to add to the sparse military knowledge of the Seminoles' retreat. The coastal area of Florida was fairly well known by 1836, but the interior of the glades had not yet been penetrated by white men. Powell's report of his attempt pointed out the inadequacy of keel boats in such an area: "We anchored our boats that night in the great inland basin of South Florida, known as the Everglades.⁸ We had now a night view of the coast that encircles the glades. Forests of pines and cypress enclosed us on one side like a black wall; while on the other, the grass, which covers the whole surface of this shallow lake, offered no obstruction to the eye as it wandered over the dreary waste. Here, on the main land,

or on the islands in the glades, if there were Indians, so commanding was our position, that their fires would certainly have been seen by us. With the dawn we pushed into the grassy sea before us, and endeavored to approach an island seen in the distance. Several other islands were above the horizon as we progressed; but the boats, although the smallest of our little fleet, could not near either of them. The matted saw-grass, which wounds like a razor, and the deep sluices, which intersect the glades, prevented access to them on foot. I found it impracticable to navigate the glades, at this stage of water, in keel boats, though no labor had been spared; and we reluctantly commenced our return to the camp.⁹"

On November 6 Lieutenant Smith returned and informed Powell that there were no recent signs of Indians as far north as the St. Lucie River. The latter concluded that the Seminoles had completed their harvest earlier and must now be operating in the northern part of Florida. He then ordered the expedition to move southward and to continue to probe and explore the extremity of the peninsula. Powell rounded the tip of Florida and moved northward up the west coast inspecting the abandoned fishing ranches and recording information about them for future use. He reached Josefa Island in Charlotte Harbor November 30 and secured shelter against a northern gale. Two days later he decided it was time to return to Key West due to the condition of his men and boats. Finally, in early

December, Lieutenant Powell's group began to report aboard
 their respective commands.¹⁰ The cutter Dexter arrived
 in Tampa Bay with a part of the marines from the expedition
 on December 23, and the remainder came in soon after.¹¹

This initial attempt to penetrate the Everglades provided the impetus for another expedition the following fall. Lieutenant Powell was challenged by Florida's vast aquatic land, teeming with its amphibian denizens, which must, he thought, be penetrated militarily by an equally amphibious force. Powell wrote to Joel R. Poinsett, secretary of war, in September, 1837, offering his services to lead a military expedition into the glades. He pointed out to the secretary that his previous expedition had penetrated eighteen to twenty miles into the glades in deep-hulled ship's cutters. This feat had convinced him that with the proper boats the whole of south Florida was accessible to the military. He proposed that the expedition be transported to New River where in "boats built under my direction at a navy yard (or purchased) of the lightest draught and to stow in nests" could be used for the actual¹² penetration. Poinsett was impressed and invited Powell to Washington.

The "Project of an Expedition to the Everglades of South Florida" was formally presented by Powell to the War Department in October. "It is proposed to circumnavigate the Everglades - discover the aforesaid retreats, to endeavour to capture the women & children, to fall upon the

war parties - and to harass & terrify the nation, by this unexpected inroad from this quarter." He suggested a force of 100 seamen, 100 soldiers, and the necessary officers from each service. The whole expedition was to be outfitted with "not less than twenty boats - flat built and fitted with sails oars &c."¹³ This offer was accepted and the details of organization were left to Powell.

By mid-October, he was in Charleston, South Carolina, gathering the equipage he considered necessary. He bought two boats and fourteen pirogues and ordered twelve boats constructed. Finally, he chartered four schooners to transport the navy detachment and equipment to St. Augustine where the army personnel were to be embarked.¹⁴

General Jesup had taken command of the military forces in Florida from Governor Call on December 9, 1836. Prior to that he had been in charge of the Alabama sector of the Creek campaign under Scott where he had gained experience in Indian fighting. During his first winter in Florida he divided the territory into two zones. The northern sector was similar to a zone of interior, under Brigadier General Walker K. Armistead, and was serviced principally by Florida militiamen and the West India Squadron's sailors who garrisoned certain forts. This had freed the regulars to pursue the Seminoles southward. For the winter campaign season of 1837-1838, Jesup again divided the territory into the two zones and emphasized offensive operation to force the Indians south.¹⁵

Secretary Poinsett counseled General Jesup to insure that the army officers assigned to Powell's group would not outrank the lieutenant.¹⁶ Jesup complied, although he protested that the force was too large to be an efficient exploring party and too small to be a combat group for the forthcoming operations,¹⁷ and they would not be ready to move as soon as he wished. At the same time the general requested that Powell's group be placed under his direct command. Meanwhile, Secretary of the Navy Dickerson informed Dallas that Powell had been selected to lead this expedition, and, while he would explore the glades and render any aid needed by the army in its forthcoming campaign, he was to report directly to the commodore.¹⁸ Later, Powell mentions his instructions from the "Secretary at War" as the basic guidelines for the expedition when he wrote the final report of his activities in South Florida to Dallas.¹⁹ The command situation was confusing.

When Powell arrived at St. Augustine, General Jesup sent for him to report to headquarters at Black Creek. Jesup planned to utilize three forces in south Florida to sweep the area, and to hold the Indians while the main assault pushed south. The southern groups were Colonel Smith's Louisiana Volunteers in the west, operating from the mouth of the Caloosahatchee River; Colonel Zachary Taylor's 1st Infantry Regiment

in the center, covering the area between the Kissimmee River and Pease Creek; and Powell's small mixed force of sailors, Company I, 1st Artillery, and a detachment from the Washington City Volunteers to operate along the east coast.²⁰ It was at headquarters that Powell received his first movement orders; he was directed to proceed to the St. Lucie River to investigate the possibility of opening communications between Indian River and the St. Lucie for military probes into the interior of the peninsula.

In mid-December, Powell's command left St. Augustine for Mosquito Inlet. There they off-loaded from the schooners and sailed down the lagoon in the expedition's small boats to the Haulover, a narrow stretch of land separating the lagoon from Indian River. The transports were directed to carry the bulk of the provisions down the coast to rendezvous with Powell at Indian River. Some days earlier, navy Lieutenant John T. McLaughlin had transported First Lieutenant John B. Magruder's detachment of three companies of 1st Artillery to the Haulover.²¹ The two commands remained here throughout the month of December.

At first Powell kept his men busy moving their thirty boats across the land from the lagoon to the river. A more pressing problem for him was the lack of military cohesiveness of his force. Therefore, he frequently exercised his conglomerate group in military formations and close order drill, a task certainly made necessary by the divergent backgrounds of his force of army regulars, volunteer

militia, and navymen, especially the sailors. This period was also beneficial to the officers, for like the men, they had only recently assembled for this expedition. Lieutenant Powell was experienced, but his officers were new to this type of operations. Midshipman Peter U. Murphy and William P. McArthur had been at the naval school at Norfolk until ordered to this expedition in the fall, and Passed Midshipman Horace N. Harrison joined Powell at St. Augustine. Surgeon Jacob Rhett Motte of Magruder's command wrote a most revealing eyewitness account of the drill formation of the expedition: "When drawn up in line they presented a curious blending of black and white, like the keys of a piano forte; many of the sailors being coloured men. There was also an odd alternation of tarpaulin hats and pea-jackets, with forage caps and soldiers trip roundabouts; soldiers and sailors, white men and black, being all thrown into the ranks indiscriminately, a beautiful specimen of mosaic, thus modifying sailor's ardour with soldier's discipline."²²

The day after Christmas, 1837, the expedition departed the Paulover to explore Indian River. Captain Harvey Brown and Joseph E. Johnston,²³ the group's topographical engineer, were to select and mark sites along the route for depots; later Lieutenant Magruder's group was to follow and construct forts at the places selected. On the evening of the second day, December 27, they arrived at a location previously selected by General Jesup

to be inspected. As the boats pulled into the shore the men were startled to glimpse a small band of Seminoles break from cover and flee to the interior. Powell said "their fleetness defied pursuit."²⁴ The following night the group made camp on a high oak bluff on the north bank of the St. Sebastian River. There was a brief period of rest until dark, then Powell had the men ascend the river looking for fires which would betray the hostile campsites. This search lasted all night and the river was scouted to its headwaters without discovering the enemy. On the next day the group continued south and arrived at the mouth of Indian River. They made camp and prepared to wait for the transports. On December 31 Magruder's group joined them. While at the inlet Powell sent Captains Brown and Murphy to scout the mainland and Lieutenant Harrison to reconnoitre the mouth of the St. Lucie River.

Fresh supplies were received from the transports the first week in January and Powell departed for the St. Lucie. He was concerned for the physical comfort of his men, knowing from previous duty the strength-sapping rigors of life in the swamps. "I left Capt. Irvin's company of Washington City Volunteers at Fort Pierce, on my way. We had three kinds of troops in our little band Soldiers, Volunteers & Seaman, with their respective officers. Perfect unanimity of course could not be expected and as the Volunteers had not been included in the original plan it fell to their lot to separate."²⁵ He had not yet learned

of the Battle of Okeechobee which took place on December 25, and so he was not aware that large numbers of Indians had been forced into the Everglades by military pressure.²⁶ Whether or not this would have influenced his decision can not be determined. When the group reached the St. Lucie, it made camp "on the sea beach where we discharged the boats of their heaviest lading & started up the river."²⁷ Again Powell traveled at night and "started an Indian from his lair." The next day the force had a brief engagement with a small band on the north fork of the St. Lucie. Powell and his men reached the headwaters where they made camp and waited. Captain Brown left to find General Jesup to report their progress. Powell kept searching the area while awaiting a reply.

One day he sent a man back to the base camp a half hour's walk from the party. The sailor lost the trail and strayed off. Two days later he was found in a state of exhaustion from his efforts to locate himself in that wild and desolate country.

It was at the headwaters of Jupiter River, as the expedition was leaving the interior, that Powell engaged in his most serious confrontation with hostile Indians. Around January 10 or 11, 1838, while exploring the St. Lucie, he discovered an Indian trail with signs that a large band had recently moved southward. Military engagement was his prime purpose, so Powell set out following the trail. On the fifteenth, he overtook a squaw tending a herd who, when

captured, volunteered information that there were several Indian camps in the vicinity. Twenty-three men were left to guard the boats and the squaw was pressed into service as a guide. She led the group down a well-beaten trail about five miles to a cypress swamp from which columns of smoke were rising. Lieutenant Powell formed his force into an extended line of three divisions with acting Lieutenants Harrison and McArthur each leading a division of sailors. Lieutenant Fowler led the army group. The entire force numbered about fifty-five sailors and twenty-five soldiers. Previously Midshipman Murphy and his men had been sent on detached duty.

It was four o'clock in the afternoon when the force came to the swamp. A war-whoop echoed ahead and instantly Powell ordered a charge. The Seminoles were superb guerrilla fighters using the terrain to maximum advantage. They would emerge for an instant to shoot at the charging line and then disappear again into the underbrush. The nerve-shattering war-whoops, commencing as a low growl and increasing in pitch to a shrill yell, followed each shot. The steady rifle fire from the underbrush, the Indians popping up here and there for a split second, and the treacherous swampy terrain added to the difficulty of keeping the inexperienced sailors in a coordinated line of advance. Tactically a fluid line utilizing natural cover with one group providing fire support for another's advance would have been more practical, but this was not the standard

battlefield procedure at the time. Thus casualties were rather one sided.

Acting Lieutenant Harrison was shot in the shoulder at the outset and his division was left without an officer to lead. Powell ordered Lieutenant Fowler to enter the swamp on the right and acting Lieutenant McArthur to lead the remaining two divisions along the original line of advance. One of the sailors near Powell was shot in the leg, but he continued the fight and killed his opponent with a blast of "both barrels of Captain Powell's double
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gun, loaded with buckshot."

The enemy was forced slowly backwards until the warriors were at the edge of the more dense portion of the cypress swamp. Here they held and maintained a steady and unrelenting fire upon the advancing line. This fire from the unseen enemy force of undetermined size took its toll upon the attackers. Lieutenant McArthur was seriously wounded and the expedition's surgeon, Doctor Leitner, was
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killed. Some of the unofficered sailors began milling about, night was approaching, and the number of wounded was increasing. Powell realized his deteriorating position and ordered a withdrawal.

While recrossing the swamp the army group came under heavy fire and Lieutenant Fowler was shot in the thigh and side, forcing him out of action. Captain Johnston immediately took charge and effectively directed the rear guard activity of the army regulars.

The sailors were raw recruits to this type of land operations and with the approaching darkness, the finer points of retreating and maintaining unit integrity weakened. The feeling of loneliness which can assail a man in combat, especially he who has not developed a strong sense of esprit de corps, took possession of some. The savages moving in from behind, the lengthening shadows, and the safety of the boats provided a strong feeling of insecurity for the sailors which overcame their recently instilled discipline. The sailors of the un-officered division broke ranks and ran for the boats! Had the rest of the detachment followed in rout, the Seminoles could have picked off the men at will.

Powell and Harrison, both wounded, were able to keep the remaining sailors in a ragged, yet effective, military formation. The brunt of the rear guard action fell to the army detachment and through their efforts the retreat did not turn into a rout. The firing was maintained until about seven-thirty in the evening when the expedition finally reached the boats and was able to pull off. Lieutenant Powell's final recapitulation to Commodore Dallas was: five killed (one surgeon, two seamen, and two soldiers) and twenty-two wounded (four officers, including Powell, one non-commissioned officer, eleven privates, one boatswain's mate, and five seamen). Later Powell picked up a wounded man who had lost his way during the retreat, reducing the number killed to four.

In addition, one of the boats, containing a keg of powder, rum, and whiskey, was inadvertently left on the bank during the retreat because it was not noticed in the darkness. Powell brought his force back to Indian River Inlet where the wounded could be cared for, then sailed to Fort Pierce where the injured could receive hospital treatment.

Meanwhile General Jesup led the main column south along the coast from Fort Pierce. He detoured inland rather than ford the St. Lucie River, and on his way back to the coast engaged the Seminoles at the same locale where Powell had fought a few days earlier. The Battle of Lockahatchee on January 24, 1838, involved an estimated 200 or 300 warriors. Enemy casualties were unknown, but the army suffered seven killed and thirty-one wounded, including General Jesup. The Indians retreated into the interior where the army could not follow, in spite of its Dearborn wagons with their big, wide wheels, and watertight bodies. The horses's legs were torn by the sawgrass and the physical effort expended moving the vehicles through the morass was too great to endure. On the twenty-seventh, the 1st Artillery reached Jupiter Bay, out of forage and with but two days of rations. Powell arrived with supplies on that same day. His boats made several trips provisioning the force at Jupiter until February 4, when the group was ordered to sail

for Key Biscayne. General Jesup felt that by sending Colonel Benjamin K. Pierce with a part of the 1st Artillery and Powell's sailors to Key Biscayne by water his force could proceed southward by land and trap the Indians.

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Powell's defeat bothered him so much that before he left Indian River Inlet he sent an additional report to the secretary of the navy. "It is now too late to refer to the original composition of the expedition which was not in accordance with joint instructions of the Secretary of War -- yours, and my own. The seamen were all landsmen and three-fifths of the regulars were volunteers. I could have taught them to make watches as easily as to learn the one to handle an oar and the other a musket. Nor do I say this in reproach to either, but to show that service like this required men who had nothing to learn of the business before them."

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Powell insisted that his assault group be strengthened with an additional company of regulars and that the volunteers be excluded. This was done and his command now consisted of himself as commander and acting Lieutenants Harrison and Murphy as division officers for the sailors. First Lieutenant John B. Magruder, replacing Lieutenant Fowler, commanded Company I; Second Lieutenant Robert McLane, commanded Company E; Captain Johnston continued as topographical

officer; and Dr. Leonard, acting surgeon, replaced the deceased Dr. Leitner. With this group Powell sailed south and arrived at Key Biscayne on February 11. He spent the rest of the month establishing a depot there and erecting Fort Dallas on the mainland. ³³

Early in March, after General Jesup received information that Sam Jones [Chief Arpeika ³⁴], with the Mikasukis, was in the interior of the Everglades near New River. He ordered Lieutenant Colonel James Bankhead to Key Biscayne and informed Powell that he should aid the colonel. At the same time, Jesup wrote to Commodore Dallas of Powell's performance: "Lt. Powell has not failed, he has cooperated with me most efficiently and is now at the point where he can enter the Everglades. He will penetrate them so soon as I shall have placed a force on New River sufficient to protect his movements which will be in a few days. His affair in this vicinity was most gallant though he was compelled to retreat to his boats with some loss." ³⁵ The force Jesup spoke of was Lieutenant Colonel Bankhead, with six companies of the 1st and 4th Artillery; Major William Lauderdale, with 200 Tennessee Volunteers; Lieutenant Robert Anderson, with a company of the 3rd Artillery; and Powell's group.

While the army forces moved towards the rendezvous on the edge of the glades along the north fork of New River, Powell scouted the interior. Just after entering the Everglades he found a fresh trail leading

into the interior, and he communicated this information to Colonel Bankhead. The country had experienced a drought and the normally wet glades had been turned into a muddy swamp too dry for boats and too wet for walking. Bankhead prepared for this venture by leaving his horses on the mainland, depositing most of his baggage on the first island he came to after entering the Everglades, and distributing his troops among the boats. The soldiers put their muskets and cartridge-boxes in the boats to keep them dry while all hands pushed and towed the watercraft through miles of ooze and saw grass. Finally, on March 22, 1838, they reached the island in the sea of mud where the Indians were encamped.

Bankhead attempted to parley, but the Seminoles fired upon his flag of truce. The colonel immediately went into action even though it was only about an hour before sunset. He posted an extended line to cover the front of the hammock. Major Reynold Kirby, with five companies of artillery and two of the Tennessee Volunteers, was dispatched to the left flank where the water was shallow, and Powell was sent to the right flank where it was deep. When his boats came within gun range, the Seminoles opened fire, and he answered with a four pounder in the bow. Before the navy could link up with Kirby, the hostiles realized the plan and fled in great haste leaving food, lead, powder, and

twenty skin canoes. This sortie was important for it was one of the early attacks, after two years of war, into the asylum of the Everglades where the Indians had boasted that "No white man could go."³⁶

After this engagement Powell returned to Fort Dallas to repair his boats. While he was thus engaged he received instructions from General Jesup to release one of the artillery companies. Afterwards he continued his routine probing with a reduced force until April. He ended his expedition at Key West. Many of his men were suffering from scorbati, and there **were not** enough provisions on the key for them. Powell prevailed upon Captain William A. Howard of the Madison to take him to Havana for fresh vegetables. When the cutter returned, she loaded Magruder's company and took them to New River. Powell brought his naval force up the west coast to Pensacola.³⁷

Lieutenant Powell did not feel his primary objective, exploring the interior of the Everglades, had been accomplished. "Letters from Genl Jesup directing the return of the companies of artillery-," he wrote Poinsett, "terminated the labours of the expedition which I have the honor to command and without accomplishing, I regret to say the principal object for which it was fitted out. Nevertheless, the secondary considerations that of co-operation with the army corps, to the full extent of its ability, has I believe been effected.

"Falling in with the army at the outset and constantly thereafter engaged in executing the wishes of the commanding general, the time at which the everglades are navigable passed by - so that a partial access to them, only - was found practicable. The information obtained by the expedition is hence mostly confined to the coast and rivers - but the principal benefit derived from its operations will be found in its being the pioneer to the southern corps - and indirectly leading to the most important results of the last campaign."³⁸

There is no explanation among Powell's official correspondence as to why he brought his plan to the War Department. He may have sounded out his own service first, but the type of expedition he presented probably seemed to be a military undertaking. In any case, he is the first to show a concept of combat resembling riverine warfare; he attempted to blend the personnel of both services; he devised special watercraft for his mission; he wanted to use internal waterways to reach the enemy; finally, he was prepared for sustained operations in a riverine environment.

CHAPTER 5

SHIPWRECKS AND INDIAN MASSACRES

General Jesup was convinced that the West India Squadron's blockade was ineffective. "I am apprehensive of the Indians obtaining powder from Havana on the one side," he wrote Poinsett in August, 1837, "and New Providence on the other; and if a small naval force, or even the cutters which were under the direction of the Navy last winter, could be spared, much advantage would result."¹ This was forwarded to the secretaries of the navy and treasury, and it brought action. Commodore Dallas sent the schooner Grampus to Havana and Nassau to seek information on the arms smuggling. Afterwards she sailed off the southern tip of Florida boarding all suspicious vessels. Captain Elisha Peck made a negative report at the completion of his cruise. The Treasury Department turned over the cutters Jefferson and Jackson to the squadron, and Dallas had them operate off the west coast of Florida cooperating with the military.²

Army pressure was forcing the Indians southward and creating increased enemy activity in that area. Captain John Walton, of the Carysfort Reef lightship, had maintained a garden on Key Largo for years. On

June 25, 1837, he and four unarmed crewmen rowed over to visit his orchard. Indians were waiting for them and opened fire when they stepped out of their boat. Whalton and one other were killed in the first salvo. The remaining three, in spite of the fact that two of them were wounded, managed to set afloat the boat and flee. The Seminoles manned a canoe to give chase, but wet their rifles while launching. When they were able to use their weapons again, their quarry was well out of range and widening the lead.³

Later that month Winslow Lewis of Boston arrived at Biscayne Bay to take over the duties of lighthouse keeper at Cape Florida, but on learning of Whalton's murder he refused to stay. In the same area one of the small coastal vessels engaged in hunting turtles reported⁴ being chased by a war-party in canoes.

In January, 1838, Dickerson informed the War Department that the cutter Madison had been made available to the navy. He wanted to know what duty to assign her. Poinsett replied that the various disasters occurring in South Florida pointed up the need for naval protection in that area. The east coast from Key Biscayne south to Key West had always been dangerous waters for sailing vessels, and had long supported a thriving wrecking business. Now that hostile Indians were so active on land the risk was greater. This made it imperative that armed aid be offered to those cast on shore. It was the

end of March before the Madison, Captain William A. Howard, arrived at Pensacola, and June before she and the Campbell reported to General Zachary Taylor, who had replaced General Jesup in May, 1838.⁵

Taylor's plan had been first to drive the Indians south of a line roughly from Tampa Bay to St. Augustine. This would keep the Seminoles from "every portion of Florida worth protecting." The second part of his program was to cut the Indians in the south off from all trade with white men so that they would eventually desire to leave their barren lands and migrate. Taylor wanted the cutters to cruise up both sides of the peninsula from a rendezvous point at Cape Sable, not only to aid distressed mariners, but to stop arms traffic and visit the various army posts along the coast to check on their safety. They were to be his sea link in the chain of force set up to isolate the Seminoles.⁶

The secretary of war took active measures of his own beyond that of his theater commander's. He asked navy Lieutenant John T. McLaughlin his opinion concerning this problem.⁷ McLaughlin submitted a written proposal in May, 1838. He felt the army needed a high speed schooner of sixty or seventy tons which would not draw more than five or six feet of water; it should have a beam wide enough to store a barge in each waist; and these barges should draw no more than eight inches, be pulled by ten oars, and carry fifteen men.⁸ The armament

should consist of one twelve pounder on the schooner and two light swivel guns for the barges. In addition, there should be one Whitehall boat, light and fast, pulled by four oars, to overtake any of the Seminole canoes. Poinsett approved this and forwarded the letter on to the navy. Three days later Dickerson replied that the navy did not have either the schooner or the small boats called for, "but if the Secretary of War will provide them it will give me pleasure to furnish officers & men for them as recommended." The offer was accepted. McLaughlin was sent to New York, even before Poinsett acknowledged Dickerson's letter, where he purchased the yacht Wave from John C. Stevens.⁹

The Wave left New York on August 1, 1838, headed for South Florida. Enroute she was forced into Coracoque Inlet, North Carolina, to ride out a storm off Cape Hatteras. This delayed her arrival at St. Augustine until August 21. McLaughlin wrote: "Her conduct during a continued series of South Westerly gales & heavy head Seas has proved her to be as fine a sea-boat as she was known to be a Sailer - With the exception of two hundred miles She has beaten her way from N. York & has more than realized all my expectations of her."¹⁰ She sailed the next day for the Florida reef to join the Madison and Campbell already on station. Before the Wave arrived the Madison received orders to return to her revenue station at Portsmouth, New Hampshire. By September 2,

the Wave's two barges Shocco and Bennett were on patrol among the keys.

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Three days later the brig Alna, of Portland, Maine, enroute to Boston from San Jago de Cuba, ran into a strong blow from the northeast. As the winds increased in intensity Captain Charles Thomas took in sail. By the seventh the storm had reached gale proportions. All canvas had been furled and the brig was being steadily blown downwind towards the Florida coast some fifteen miles to the westward. The captain decided to unfurl some of his sail in an effort to halt the drift towards land. It was dangerous work and all hands turned to in the attempt to boat against the gale; however, the winds were too strong and carried away the head of the bowsprit. Once again the crew shortened sail hoping to strike that delicate balance of using just enough canvas to maintain way without further damage to the rigging. It was no use; the elements were overpowering. The Alna was heaved to as the crew shortened sail. Then, as the last resort, Captain Thomas ordered the mainsail lowered and the brig headed for the coast. He knew it was impossible to remain off-shore; therefore, he determined to beach his ship during daylight hours in an effort to save the crew.

As the Alna's head swung round toward the waiting land, the heavy seas swept over her carrying all loose gear on deck over the side. It was a struggle for all hands just to remain aboard. One crewman, John Sheaf,

lost his grip and was washed over the side. The remainder hung on grimly. Once the decision had been made to beach her and the brig headed towards land, it took very little time for the storm to slam the small ship upon the shore fifteen miles north of the Cape Florida light. The captain and crew waited for a brief period after the initial grounding until the wind and water had driven the Alma firmly onto the coast before leaving the vessel. For the next few hours the men of the beached brig worked feverishly off-loading clothing and supplies from the stricken vessel to insure their survival in case the Alma broke up.

The storm abated and the crew remained in their camp by the brig awaiting rescue. They were not worried for they had provisions and water enough for a month. There was little apprehension concerning hostile Indians among the castaways. Sunday morning Samuel Cammott, of Portland, Maine, went aboard the wreck to retrieve the captain's spyglass so that a fire could be ignited by the sun. Then he accompanied Captain Thomas on a scouting walk to the south. They saw nothing and returned to camp after traveling a distance of five or six miles. Had the two gone farther they might have met a war-party investigating other shipping disasters.

Not too far away, the French brig Courier de Tampico, Captain Jule Julian, had been driven ashore with a loss of

nine of her sixteen man crew. When the Indians visited this group they offered the Frenchmen aid and informed them that the Seminole nation was at war only with the Americans. Nearly, three small fishing sloops, the Alabama, Dread, and Caution of Mystic, Connecticut, were grounded.¹²

The seventeen American crewmen of these fishing smacks had been massacred by the Indians, with the exception of Joseph Noble of the Alabama. He managed to reach the men of the Courier de Tampico and he passed himself off as a Frenchman.¹³

The Florida conflict first intruded upon the Alma's crew at noon that day when a band of warriors made their appearance. A shot struck First Mate Andrew J. Plummer as he was packing some of his clothes which had been drying in the sun. He died instantly. The two men nearest Plummer, William Reed of Salem, Massachusetts, the ship's cook, and a Dutchman named Ryan started to flee and were immediately pursued. Captain Thomas tried to calm the remaining two crewmen, Eleazer Wyer, Jr., of Portland, Maine, and Samuel Cammett, by saying that the natives would not hurt them if they did not run. This advice was terminated abruptly by a second shot which passed through Wyer's hand and thigh. The three ran down the beach with the enemy in full chase.¹⁴ Captain Thomas fell behind, was overtaken, and killed; both Wyer and Cammett eluded their foes by taking to the heavy underbrush.

The day being warm and sunny neither man had his shoes on when the Indians attacked. Wyer pressed on through the palmettoes unmindful of the pain to his feet; Cammatt on the other hand stopped running as soon as he lost sight of the Indians and hid himself until nightfall.

In the meantime, Reed and Ryan were captured. For the remainder of the day the two captives were forced to work around the camp for the Indians. At dusk they were taken out to be shot. The cook was killed immediately, but Ryan, although shot at, managed to escape in the darkness. During the initial confusion, while the warriors were hunting for him, Ryan returned to the wreck of the Alma and hid in the hold. Monday the Seminoles stayed near the brig, and the Dutchman remained in hiding, but the following day the warriors departed. Ryan emerged on deck in time to hail the passing wrecking sloop America and Mount Vernon. No sooner had his rescue been effected than the Indians returned to the Alma.

The struggle for survival endured by the remaining two men, separated and alone on a hostile coast, almost defies belief. Wyer pushed his way through the dense underbrush all day. That night he continued north occasionally falling and resting for a few minutes then getting up and moving on. Monday he discovered his feet were leaving a bloody

trail in the sand, and bound them with flannel taken from his shirt. He had nothing to eat Monday or Tuesday. By Wednesday hunger forced him to fight off numerous birds for the privilege of eating some of the dead fish which had been washed up on the shore. Just before sundown that day he saw some sail, but could not attract attention to himself. He had almost given up hope when the wrecker Mount Vernon, came into view and rescued him.

Samuel Cammett remained hidden all Sunday afternoon, not daring to move until darkness. As soon as he felt it safe to do so he returned to the beach to travel north. He had only gone about five miles when he unexpectedly encountered a small party of warriors. Immediately he ran into a swamp where he waded out in the muddy waters to hide. The Indians spread out encircling the area, but they did not venture into the swamp itself for fear of snakes. After hiding an hour or so, Cammett was able to escape undetected, and he again returned to the shore for easier traveling.

At the end of two days his neck was so swollen from mosquito bites he could scarcely turn his head. Like Wyer, Cammett also subsisted on the dead fish thrown up by the sea. Wednesday afternoon he saw four sloops coasting northward in a light wind. He managed to keep up with them throughout the rest of the day and night, but was not able to communicate with them. At dawn he saw one of the sloops stand in toward the shore and launch a small boat. Only

then did he realize he had been sighted. When he was brought alongside, the first man to greet him was his friend Eleazer Wyer, for the rescue sloop was the Mount
 15
Vernon.

The very day Carrett was rescued, September 13, 1838, McLaughlin, anchored at Key West, received the news of the shipping disasters. He immediately got underway. During his sortie he picked up the Wave's two barges which were returning from a patrol among the keys. At the same time the Campbell, First Lieutenant Napoleon L. Coste, commanding, was also making its way to Cape Florida to render aid. Enroute the cutter exchanged signals with the Mount Vernon and learned that the Alma was in the possession of the Indians. The two war vessels met and proceeded up Biscayne Bay in company to anchor on the evening of September 17.

Lieutenant McLaughlin held a council of war aboard the Wave. Boat parties were organized, equipped, and dispatched at midnight to investigate the wrecks. McLaughlin led the Wave's party of thirty seamen and marines in his two barges. Second Lieutenant John Faunce, accompanied by his civilian guide, Mr. Egan, commanded the Campbell's
 16
 group of twenty-three officers and men. It was five o'clock in the morning when they landed on the banks of Indian Creek near a well traveled Indian trail. Here they discovered the burnt remains of the fishing sloops from Mystic, which had been fired by the Seminoles. As daylight

increased, the sailors saw the Alna eight or nine miles to the north and manned their boats and headed for her.

At noon they spotted three canoes near the brig. Lieutenant Faunce, Egan, and nine men were landed to go inland through a swamp to take the Indians from behind while the remainder approached by water. They were too few to outflank the enemy; Faunce ordered his men to charge hoping the Indians would flee in their canoes into the hands of the waterborne group. The engagement was brief. The Seminoles, about fifteen, offered little resistance; they fled into the swamp leaving their canoes and equipment behind. The cuttermen killed three Indians and wounded an equal number while receiving no injuries themselves. They were too exhausted from the night's exertion and the march through the swamp to pursue the Seminoles. After a brief rest they gathered up all of the ship's papers which could be found. Then they set fire to the Alna. They took possession of one of the captured canoes and destroyed the other two before departing. At half past seven that evening the group returned to their respective ships.

The following month men from the Campbell engaged a party of hostiles in a minor skirmish near Bear's Cut. Two of the Indians killed carried powder pouches decorated with eleven scalps which had been taken from the castaways of the September gale.

The Alma, the Courier de Tampico, and the three fishing smacks were not the only victims of the storm. The brig Export of Kennebunk, Maine, was wrecked on Carysfort Reef, but her crew survived. The schooner Palestine of Bangor, Maine, had to be abandoned in the Gulf of Mexico after receiving serious topside damage. An unknown brig lost all rigging sixty-five miles north of Cape Florida and was riding on her anchors awaiting rescue. The Madison, which had been detached from the naval service and was returning to Portsmouth, New Hampshire, in company with two wreckers, was ordered to investigate. McLaughlin felt there was no further need for the Wave on the east coast and headed back to the reef
18
to resume station.

The maritime tragedies of the September gale pointed up the necessity of increasing the naval force off the southern tip of Florida. The following month General Taylor authorized McLaughlin to obtain a small vessel to work with the Wave and her two barges on the reef. McLaughlin chartered the sloop Panther from Henry Benners and placed acting Lieutenant Edmund T. Shubrick in command.
19

Indian sighting continued. In mid-November, Lieutenant Coste found a large camp of Indians while the Campbell was lying off the Miami River. They so outnumbered his small crew that he was reluctant to attack. Near the end of that month, Lieutenant Edmund Shubrick

brought the Panther, the Shocco, and a schooner borrowed from Jacob Housman up to Key Biscayne to form a boat expedition to the Boca Raton. Before his group disembarked they saw a large party of Seminoles on the beach. Shubrick refused to send his sailors out against a superior foe, even though the warriors built fires on the shore to entice them to land.

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A few days later a boat came alongside and reported the grounding of the steamer Wilmington north of Cape Florida. Shubrick headed for the distressed vessel. Fifty miles beyond the cape he rescued the steamer's sixteen man crew. Enroute back, he sent acting Lieutenant Charles B. Howard in the Shocco and the schooner to the wreck of a Spanish brig. Howard saved the crew, thirty slaves, and most of the cargo, but lost the Shocco when the wind picked up and blew her off the reef. Shubrick arrived later and removed quantities of lead from the brig before he set her afire.

These Indian hostilities at the tip of the peninsula caused reactions on three levels of the federal government: The local theater, the War Department, and Congress. In the theater, General Taylor had replaced the services of the Madison, which had been returned to the Treasury Department, with the Panther. A month later he had McLaughlin exchange her for the schooner Caroline which was more adequate for the service required. (Just over two years later the Caroline was replaced by the David B. Small.

The latter two schooners were known as the Otsego during the period of their service on the reef.)²¹ In Washington, the War Department requested the navy to add to the force now patrolling the reef. The West India Squadron put two vessels on cruising stations between Dry Tortugas and Cape Florida on the east coast and St. Marks and Tortugas on the west coast.²² At the same time, when the Treasury Department requested the return of the Campbell, Secretary Poinsett replied most emphatically that this was not the time to diminish the number of vessels in Florida. Rather, as recent events showed, more ships should be made available--and as soon as possible.²³

The blockade of the peninsula now consisted of three lines of surveillance. The bays and inlets of the extreme southern tip were under the scrutiny of the oared barges. Along the reef itself were the schooners Wave, Otsego, and the cutter Campbell. Farther out to sea sailed the two sloops of war Boston and Ontario.

In the Congress, at the session after the massacres, additional funds were appropriated to the army "to cut off all communications between the Indians of Florida and the islands of Providence and Cuba, and to prevent a repetition of the outrages . . ."²⁴ The War Department used this money to add the sea steamer Poinsett to the blockade force in April, 1899.

If the blockade force had three surveillance lines, it lacked central coordination. The two sloops

of war on the seaward patrol were under direct control of the commander, West India Squadron, based at Pensacola. The military theater commander had no method of communicating with them, except via Pensacola. Lieutenant McLaughlin's group on the reef was also assigned to the squadron, but his vessels and sailing orders came from the War Department. When he had first assumed command of the Wave, he requested orders from the navy but he was referred to the army. The secretary of war wrote: "I was under the impression that what is technically termed 'sailing orders,' would have to be given you from the Navy Department; but I find that it is there considered that you have been placed wholly under the directions of this Department, and that, from here, must issue all orders and instructions both as to your time of Sailing, and as are necessary to govern your operations during your cruise." He was then instructed to sail as soon as possible for the reef. His primary mission was to prevent intercourse between any vessel and the Indians, not only of munitions, but of all sorts of supplies. "The performance of this duty is the principal object of the expedition; but so far as it will not interfere with that object, you will also cooperate with, and render to the military forces in Florida, all the aid and assistance in your power." ²⁵ Once on station, McLaughlin worked very closely with the military commander, and the West India Squadron's control over him was minimal.

The treasury cutter Campbell's chain of command was the most nebulous. It would appear that this vessel was, from the stand point of utilization, lost for almost a year. When the War Department first wanted to put a small vessel off the Florida Keys it asked the Treasury Department for a cutter. (Apparently the department was unaware that General Taylor had just ordered the Madison and Campbell to cruise off the Keys on June 22, 1838.) Secretary Levi Woodbury wrote to Poinsett on July 5, 1838, suggesting that the Campbell, already under navy orders, would be well fitted for such duty. Several days later the request was repeated to the navy. James K. Paulding, now the navy secretary, transmitted the army's desires to Commodore Dallas on July 11, and reported the fact to Poinsett the same day. Two weeks later, Dallas answered that the Campbell had never reported to him, but if it did he would carry out the army's desires. Paulding wrote back on August 10: "Lt Coste will probably be found in the vicinity of Tampa Bay whither he was ordered by this Department to proceed in October last and to report to Major General Jesup or to the Commanding Officer of the U. S. Troops at that place."

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In December, 1838, after the Campbell had been on the reef almost six months, Lieutenant Coste wrote to Paulding that he had established his headquarters on Tea Table Key and had named it Fort Paulding. The secretary penned the following to this report: "See how Lt N. Coste

stands in relation to the Naval Service-" Under this was the answer: "He is under the orders of this Dept. employed at the request of the Sec of War to cruise in the Eastern Coast of Florida &c - He reports regularly to Com Dallas." ²⁷ The structure of the blockade force was simplified when the Campbell was returned to the Treasury Department later in the month.

In reality there were three naval forces operating around the keys: Commodore Dallas' sea patrol, General Taylor's schooners and barges, and the revenue cutter. There was no unity of command, nor even an officer assigned to coordinate the activities of this diverse group. Further, the individual vessels did not carry a common navy Signal Book to communicate among themselves. (Later when this force was turned over to the navy for control, McLaughlin asked that he be issued the Signal Book and Telegraphic Dictionary. His request was refused because the secretary ²⁸ felt his service did not require it.) Such decentralization hindered naval operations off the reef.

The immediate answer to Indian hostilities along the southern tip of the territory had been supplied by providing a naval force to that area. The haphazard manner with which it had been provided promoted its inefficiency. This heterogeneous collection of naval vessels acted independently, except when accidentally drawn together in response to some disaster. It lacked an

on-the-scene commander, a common organization, and an aggressive policy towards the enemy. The blockade duty and minor shore patrols were passive. There was no direct pressure being exerted upon the Seminole Indians within the Everglades.

CHAPTER 6

THE STEAMER POINSETT

Alexander Macomb, Commanding General of the United States Army, arrived in Florida in April, 1839, with instructions from Washington to end the long drawn-out Indian conflict. Macomb did not interfere in the routine duties of General Taylor, the military commander in Florida, but confined himself to arranging a meeting with the remaining Seminole chiefs to end hostilities by treaty. The Seminole nation had been reduced to four bands inhabiting the southern portion of the peninsula and a few smaller groups roaming in other areas of the territory. The principal bands in the Everglades were led by Sam Jones, Hospetarke, the Prophet, and Chakaika. Coacoochee led the best known and most feared group in the north.

The general succeeded in arranging a talk with Chitto Tustenuggee and Hallock Tustenuggee. Chitto was one of the war chiefs of Sam Jones's band. This was certainly not a very representative group, but Macomb did arrange a truce and set aside the area south of Pease Creek for the Seminoles until more final arrangements could be made. He may have hoped

that this agreement would be acceptable to the other hard-pressed chiefs once the terms were known. At any rate, on May 18, 1839, a general order was issued proclaiming the war at an end.¹

Naval operations were limited the fourth year of the conflict. There were, however, major changes to the operational organization of the sea forces assigned. In January, 1839, Commodore Dallas was relieved by Captain William B. Shubrick. In the very lengthy instruction issued by the Navy Department to the new commodore there was no mention of the Indian war in Florida, or the usual solicitation to cooperate with the army in that quarter; although, there were detailed orders on the squadron's conduct with respect to the French blockade of the Mexican gulf coast.²

The squadron now consisted of the frigate Macedonian and the sloops of war, Poston, Erie, Levant, Natchez, Ontario, Vandalia, and Warren. The secretary expressed the hope, in his instruction to Shubrick, that he could supply a brig or schooner at a later date for shallow water missions. At the end of his second month in command the new commodore requested at least three such vessels, but he was told none were available.³

The army added the sea steamer Poinsett to its small force of vessels on duty around the peninsula in April.⁴ At the same time the two service secretaries agreed that the blockade force should be under a single

naval commander on the scene. "In consequence of an arrangement made between the Secretary of War and this department," Paulding wrote to Commander Isaac Mayo on April 5, 1839, "you are hereby appointed to the command of the force to consist of the U. S. Steamer Poinsett, the Schooner Wave and a certain number of barges, destined to co-operate with the land forces in Florida in the suppression of Indian Hostilities. . . ."⁵ When the Poinsett was ready to steam south from Norfolk, Paulding informed Commodore Shubrick of Mayo's assignment and included a statement of intent: "As this is considered by the Department as special service, distinct from any connected with your Command, you will not interfere in any manner with his operations."⁶ Yet when Mayo asked the secretary to grant him permission to hoist the flag of a squadron commander, Paulding replied that his force and mission were not considered sufficient to warrant that distinction.⁷

Circumstances were such that there was little opportunity for the "Expedition for the Suppression of Indian Hostilities, Florida" (as Mayo's command was officially called) to actively participate in the Florida War. When he arrived on July 12, 1839, the territory was technically at peace, and during his brief tour of duty he did not have an opportunity to exercise his full command, for the Mayo departed to go North before Mayo arrived. McLaughlin had many men whose terms of

service ended in July. He transferred those of his crew who would sign to remain for two years to the Otsego, and he left to recruit replacements. He arrived in Washington on July 2 and did not return until December; at which time, the Poinsett was enroute North with mechanical difficulties.

When Mayo left Baltimore he decided to tow the four gunbarges assigned to the Poinsett to determine the practicability of taking them to Florida in this manner. By the time he reached Norfolk he realized the great danger to the boats from any strong wind, and he requested transportation for the barges which could not be carried aboard the steamer. Passed Midshipman Waddell was assigned to bring the men, stores, and excess barges to Key Biscayne as soon as possible.

Mayo left Norfolk on June 26; four days later he was back; he ran into a blow from the south just after rounding Cape Hatteras. He tried to make it to Coracohe Inlet, North Carolina, before his fuel supply was depleted, but headwinds made this impossible. Hatteras was on his lee, and he dared not remain off shore waiting for the wind to die down. Further, the Poinsett sprang a leak in one of the sponsons which forced him to turn away from the storm to minimize taking on water. 8
He stood northward running with the storm until it abated. By this time he did not have enough fuel to make any ports to the south, and, in fact, he was compelled to burn some of the ship's planks in order to

reach Cape Henry. Here he met the steamer South Carolina and received enough wood to return to Norfolk. He departed again on July 3, and three days later, after a few hours stop enroute for wood, made it to Charleston, South Carolina. He reached Carey's Ferry, Florida,
⁹
 July 12.

General Taylor was not there when Mayo arrived, so the commander wrote to him of his intentions. He planned to use Key Biscayne as his base of operations and to distribute his barges along the keys as far as Key West or Dry Tortugas. His instructions were, he said, to cooperate with any military operation if it became necessary to again suppress hostilities within the territory, as well as to perform blockade duty. He requested the general to forward any instructions
¹⁰
 or information on to him at his rendezvous point.

Taylor's answer reached Mayo at Key Biscayne. The general was satisfied with his plan of operation. He said, from information reaching him from middle Florida, that the Tallahassee tribe would probably not accept Macomb's treaty. If this was so it would be necessary to patrol the waters between St. Marks and Cedar Key to insure isolating them. He suggested Mayo send one of his schooners as soon as possible in anticipation of such an event occurring. Mayo decided to send the Mayo as soon as she reported to him.

After leaving Carey's Ferry, Mayo brought his

steamer into St. Augustine where the local paper reported: "The Poinsett, painted black, with her white painted ports, looks about the guards as gay as a sloop of war, and above has as much top hamper as a load of hay. She draws six feet water, and though schooner rigged, will run a chance of getting 'snagged' on the reefs if a pretty considerable supply of wood is not in readiness. What with a small vessel, red hot boilers, a vertical sun, smoke, cinders and mangrove-key mosquitos, the officers and crew may anticipate delightful cruising." ¹¹

His first task, after arriving at Key Biscayne, was to send out woodcutting parties to gather fuel for the steamer. Afterwards, he organized a small force to enter the Everglades on an exploring expedition. Captain Martin Burke, USA, stationed at Key Biscayne, accompanied the group to acquaint the sailors and marines with some of the peculiarities of the terrain. When Mayo returned to the Poinsett, he found Mad Tiger (Catsba Tustemugge) and some twenty Indians aboard visiting. Mayo ordered his wood and water parties to proceed well armed and to exercise care, in spite of this show of good feelings. ¹²

Meanwhile, on the lower Gulf coast, the army established a trading post, in accordance with the terms of Macomb's treaty, about fifteen miles up the Caloosahatchee River. Colonel William S. Barney, USA, commanded the twenty-six man detachment protecting the post. This establishment was unexpectedly attacked

on the night of July 23, 1839, by war-parties from Hospetank and Chakaika's bands acting in unison. Harney and thirteen others escaped; the rest were killed. This attack was the start of a rash of violence throughout the territory, and as the news spread, the Americans rounded up the Indians living peacefully near the various
¹³
 army posts for shipment to the west.

Mayo received notification of the massacre at Key Biscayne on July 30 just after Mad Tiger and his group had departed the Poinsett. Mayo ordered a landing party assembled and the cutters launched as soon as possible. He left immediately in his gig and overtook one of the canoes after a three hour pull. Shortly thereafter Lieutenant John A. Davis arrived in a cutter with ten men and captured another group of Indians. First Lieutenant Thomas T. Sloan, USMC, leading nine marines in the steamer's dinghy captured still another canoe. The gig being the fastest boat, Mayo turned his prize over to Davis and set out after Mad Tiger who was now on the other side of the
¹⁴
 bay. It was an exhausting task to overcome such a lead. During the chase Mad Tiger "used every exertion to make his escape, managing his sail and paddles with a great deal of skill," and Mayo added, "after getting him in my boat, he made an attempt to regain his Canoe which I had in tow, but was easily subdued. . . ." In all, the sailors captured nine warriors, six squaws, and five canoes. The prisoners were turned over to Colonel Harney at Key
¹⁵
 Biscayne.

Four days later the merchant ship Grand Turk of Boston was found beached on the Fowey Rocks. The Poinsett's crew managed to hove her off and bring her inside the reef to anchor. After twenty-four hours of constant bailing and pumping, the water still continued to gain in the hold of the Grand Turk, and the master decided to run her aground and save the rigging and spars. A wrecker appeared and made a contract with the captain for salvage, and Mayo left.

The Poinsett returned to Key Biscayne where, two days later, the transports from the North arrived with the remaining barges. Mayo soon began distributing his force as planned. On Key Biscayne he had a house built to store the expedition's supplies, and a lieutenant, eighteen men, and a large barge were left there to patrol the coast. Another group was stationed at Indian Key. The southwestern anchor for this chain of barges was Key West.

During Mayo's stay at Key West, a fishing vessel came in with a report that a white flag had been seen flying over the abandoned blockhouse near Cape Sable. Mayo thought this might be a signal from some survivor of Harney's massacre and sortied to the rescue. When he arrived, he dispatched four armed boats to scout the area, but nothing was found. Then he proceeded up the west coast to visit the Caloosahatchee. He took two barges and two cutters up river to look at the site of the massacre and to hunt for survivors. He found the store and the

other buildings still standing, but all the contents had been plundered. After spending a few days searching the interior without discovering any signs, he set a course
16
for Tampa.

Mayo wished to consult with General Taylor about the recent treaty violations, for he wanted to know what effect they had upon the military situation. When he arrived at army headquarters he had three questions: Had general hostilities recommenced? Was he justified in using force to capture all Indians whether hostile or not? Finally, if he made any captures, how were the Indians to be disposed of?

Taylor said he considered the war had been renewed, and Mayo could take all action necessary to capture or destroy any Indians he came upon. He requested that the prisoners be sent to Fort Marion at St. Augustine for safe keeping. Taylor added unofficially that he had heard that Colonel Harney was holding talks with two of the Seminole chiefs near Key Biscayne in the hopes of dividing the hostile strength. The general recommended that Mayo make no show of force in that area until Harney had
17
completed his parley.

Later, Mayo wrote to Paulding of his intention to continue scouting the Everglades; he wanted to discover the Seminoles' places of concealment. This was, in his opinion, vital information if the war was to be renewed. At the same time he reported that he could wait no longer

for the Wave, and he was sending the Otsego to cruise off the Suwannee River in preparation for hostilities from that quarter.¹⁸

The Seminoles were not the only enemy along the Florida reef. There was also disease - especially the fever. A severe outbreak appeared among Passed Midshipman Waddell's barge crew on Indian Key. Mayo visited this group in late September and found Waddell and most of his men seriously ill. They were removed to the Poinsett where two of the men died within a few hours. Waddell survived several days although all of this time delirious. Some of the citizens of the key told Mayo that Waddell's "intellect was much disordered for several days before he was taken ill." This was apparent from the condition of the camp when Mayo arrived. The quarters were filthy, and the brine had escaped from the salt provisions, and the stench from the spoiled food was overpowering. Out of the sixteen men exposed to these conditions, twelve of them were stricken and three died.

Midshipman Mayo C. Watkins was sent ashore with replacements to clean up the base and continue barge operations. Two days later he and some of his men came down with the fever. Mayo did not want to jeopardize the steamer's crew by bringing them back aboard. Instead, he sent a surgeon ashore and constructed a "commodious sail-loft" as a temporary hospital for all the invalid sailors. Surgeon William Maxwell Wood and Assistant

Surgeon Stephen A. McCreery were left to operate this infirmary.

Shortly after the Poinsett departed in answer to a Seminole attack near Fort Lauderdale, the fever spread to the medical staff. Doctor Wood and three of the attendants were incapacitated. The cook was also laid low for a few days, and he was unable to attend to his duties. One of the attendants died, and manpower was so critical that civilians had to be hired to bury him. No sooner had Wood recovered than the assistant surgeon was struck down for a week. In the midst of all of this, two men stole a boat and attempted to desert. They were captured by the owner, with the aid of two other civilians, and returned to the hospital. By the end of October the fever had passed as suddenly as it had arrived, and Commander Mayo discontinued his hospital on Indian Key. 19

During the weeks Colonel Harney was conducting talks with the Indians, Mayo was quite pessimistic about the proceedings. He stressed his opinions many times in letters sent to the secretary. "I apprehend that the object of the Indians is to gain time," he wrote on September 6, "and get supplies, I do not think they will leave the East coast where vessels are frequently cast on shore and plundered by them." Two days later he said: "Sam Jones is anxious that a part of the Eastern sea board be allowed them, I have recommended to Col Harney not to allow them one foot of it, as their object is evidently

that of plundering vessels cast on shore. As long as this treaty is going on the force under my command on the East Coast can do nothing more than look out for boats trading with the Indians and for wrecked vessels."

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His dire predictions of the Indian's motives for wanting peace were fulfilled. He received a report from Lieutenant Davis who had been sent in the gunboat Harney to assist the small garrison at Fort Lauderdale. Davis wrote that Chitto Tustenuggee had come into the post on September 27 and had invited Lieutenant C. Tompkins, the post commander, and Davis to an Indian ceremony that evening. The two accepted, hoping to strengthen relations with the Seminoles. Tompkins even volunteered to bring some whiskey for the celebration. Later in the afternoon the two officers changed their minds, but two of the men from Company K volunteered to bring the whiskey to the Indians. Privates Hopkins and Royce, accompanied by the Negro interpreter George, set out for the camp about six in the evening. It was only a short distance away and they were expected back early. Tompkins became worried when the men failed to return by eleven, and Davis offered to send out his gunboat to search for them. The Harney got within a few hundred yards of where the Indians had been camped before Hopkins was found. He was severely wounded, and he reported the three of them had been ambushed. The next day George returned to the post unscathed. He had not been hit during the action, but

had dived into the underbrush and crawled away. The body of Private Boyce was found floating downstream. Hopkins died a few days later of his wounds.

The fort braced itself for a major assault. Davis sent a message to Key Biscayne to Lieutenant Handy to bring his group with the gunboat Paulding to Fort Lauderdale. Handy responded immediately. Later Mayo brought all of his barges to the Miami River--Fort Lauderdale coast. The Seminoles, after this one encounter,²¹ retreated into the interior.

Mayo decided to enter the Everglades after them. Using two gunboats and two smaller boats he went up Little River and visited some of the old encampments. There was no sign of any activity in that vicinity. Next he ascended Snake River to probe the glades. Again he found nothing. He tried the Miami River and it was the same, no Indians. Mayo covered about thirty miles along the coast making penetrations up the various rivers without success. Finally, he decided to steam up the east coast to St. Augustine visiting the army posts along the way to check on the activity to the north.

He dispersed his force along the coast with instructions to continue probing the glades for the enemy. Lieutenant Davis and Midshipman Murray were based out of Fort Lauderdale. They were to use the gunbarges Benton and Harney. Lieutenant Sloan and his marines were stationed at Fort Kemble (Mayo's name for Fort Dallas)²²

where they could protect the crew's woodcutters working along the banks of the Miami River. They manned the Paulding and a smaller boat, and were to make excursions into the glades periodically on scouting missions. Passed Midshipman Thompson was left in charge of the stores at Key Biscayne. He had the Mayo and a cutter at his disposal; this latter group was to be more concerned with patrolling the coast seeking wrecked vessels. When Mayo had his force properly positioned, he departed for
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St. Augustine.

Originally, he had planned to visit the army posts along the way, but he found his supply of fuel too critical to allow him to deviate from his destination, except for a few hours stop at Fort Lauderdale. When he reached St. Augustine the Poinsett developed boiler trouble, serious enough to return North for repairs.

In Washington, the War Department suggested relinquishing its control over the blockade force and turning the Poinsett, Mayo, Otsego, and Flirt over to the navy. (The Flirt was still on the building ways at Baltimore.) This was done, and Paulding informed Mayo that his basic orders of the previous June from the War Department were to continue in force, but henceforth
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he was to report only to the Navy Department.

When Mayo arrived in Washington, he stated that he had left Davis in command of the men and barges remaining on the coast. He recommended that this group be separate

and distinct from McLaughlin's schooners. He argued that "by having two separate commands the Everglades can be entered at two different points as Lts Davis and McLaughlin will each have sufficient force to effect that object." Paulding accepted this view and offered Lieutenant Davis command of the barge force.²⁵

Why Mayo would prefer to divide his command is difficult to determine. It may be that he was too well trained in the cruiser-commerce-raiding philosophy to grasp the advantages of a unified command. This older concept relied upon the operations of numerous individual units with little or no stress upon multiship operations. Throughout his brief tour in Florida Mayo's strategic and tactical planning showed little appreciation for the uniqueness of his situation. He was continually applying seagoing techniques to his Indian problem.

His first assessment, just after his arrival on station, held that the steamer was the desired vehicle with which to oppose the Seminoles. He recommended a minimum of two, drawing no more than twelve inches of water, about thirty-five feet long, with a crew of thirty, and the capability of carrying a months supply of provisions. He suggested rifleproof sections three to five feet high, with loopholes, be installed around the sides in such a manner that they could be shipped and unshipped from the rail. The main armament should be a four or six pounder, similarly protected, firing through a porthole.

This would be in essence a floating fort, for he felt it would be futile to attempt to penetrate the Everglades in open boats with the crew exposed to gunfire from the dense underbrush.

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When Mayo wrote this proposal he made only a cursory examination into the interior, principally up the Caloosahatchee River. It is evident that he was projecting an Indian defense of the glades similar to what might be expected of an industrially developed people who were protecting their towns and property from a river assault force, whereas, the Seminoles had no such fixed positions to defend. Militarily they had continually met superior force with brief resistance and then complete withdrawal. The realities of this situation do not appear in Mayo's thinking. Later he began to note the inadequacies of the steamer. He pointed out that the Poinsett could not be used safely on the east coast from St. Augustine to Key Biscayne because there were no intermediate harbors available to it for shelter from storms. Her limited fuel capacity allowed no deviation between those two ports. She was, therefore, of no operational value to that coast.

He felt the steamer was well adapted for use from Key Biscayne to the Dry Tortugas. Admitting that she could not approach the shallow bays and inlets which were the refuge of the Indians, he stated that this was the reason he always kept a gunbarge or two in tow. His reliance upon barges points up his lack of understanding

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of travel in the Everglades. Two years before Lieutenant Powell had found that even the ship's cutters were too deep-hulled to penetrate the interior. Of course Mayo's only attempts to gain access to the Seminole country had been up the various streams of the east coast and his one trip up the Caloosahatchee River. He had never tried to enter the glades proper.

Before he left Florida he came to the conclusion that the Poinsett was useless on the coast and was very expensive to maintain. The steamer had to spend too much time in idleness while woodcutting parties obtained fuel. A day's cruise would consume wood which had taken several days to gather. All of this was, he felt, a waste of manpower which could be eliminated by using sailing vessels.

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Mayo's final proposal was that the armed barges were sufficient to patrol the Florida shoreline. He said they could be supplied by depots such as he had established on Key Biscayne. These barges, carrying tents for their crews and a week's supply of rations, had a fair range of action along the coast. He concluded this report with a hint that he had devised new tactics. He added he did not want to make his proposal official and so would refrain from putting it in writing. There was no further correspondence upon this subject, nor did Mayo return to Florida.

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None of these plans proposed by Mayo go to the root of the problem of how to defeat the Seminoles. In spite of his being on the scene, he did not grasp the situation, which may explain his recommendation for dividing his command; yet another reason may be intra-service jealousy.

During the Poinsett's tour in Florida her officers felt their assignment was not fully appreciated by the Navy Department, and much grudgingness was displayed towards the naval officers serving on the two army schooners, the Have and Otsego. Before departing from the North, Commander Mayo had requested that he be allowed to fly the pendant of a squadron commander. Later Surgeon W. Maxwell Wood asked that he be given the rank of fleet surgeon because of the many independent barge and schooner commands which were subordinate to the Poinsett. Both of these requests were refused. When the secretary revoked two acting appointments made by Mayo, the commander replied that "much younger officers are holding better stations in this Expedition." Lieutenant Samuel E. Munn wrote to the secretary that when he volunteered for duty on board the Poinsett he had no idea of forfeiting his rights and privileges as a lieutenant; yet when he arrived in Florida he found a passed midshipman holding a command within the same station. Lieutenant Melancthon Smith expressed similar views on finding his juniors in rank performing as captains of vessels attached to the same

duty station. He also reported he had "been informed that the officers commanding these schooners were not to be interferred with because they had volunteered when their services were important." Both Munn and Smith were referring especially to Passed Midshipman Shubrick who held an acting lieutenant's position as commander of the schooner Otsego.³⁰

Commander Mayo confirms this situation and his own attitude when he wrote Paulding: "I regret to be compelled again to state that great dissatisfaction exists amongst the officers of this vessel in consequence of their juniors having commands, and reports having just arrived that Lieut Comd^t McLaughlin, is underway out in a fine schooner, and that two young officers, are to have two others, of this I know nothing officially but if so I have earnestly to request that their seniors on board this vessel may be detached."³¹

The naval blockade organization prepared in 1839 became the fundamental structure for the later development of riverine warfare. During the year all of the navel units engaged in the war against the Seminoles had been placed under one command, which was made separate and distinct from the West India Squadron. This was a decided advantage because the latter was a seagoing organization not particularly orientated towards land operations. Unlike the squadron commodore, the

commander of this new force could concentrate upon the Indian war. What was needed was a leader who appreciated the necessity of exerting force upon the Indians within the Everglades. One, not bound to old traditions, who had the initiative and ingenuity to act aggressively against the Seminoles.

CHAPTER 7

THE MOSQUITO FLEET

Lieutenant McLaughlin brought the Wave into Washington on July 2, 1839, where she received some needed repairs before being sent to the New York Navy Yard for a complete overhaul. Before leaving Florida, he had recommended the employment of two centerboard¹ schooners for duty off the reef. This proposal was accepted by the War Department which gave to him the responsibility for the repair of the Wave as well as the building of the second schooner, the Flirt, in Baltimore, Maryland. The contract for the latter vessel was given to Michael Gardner, and, by the end of August, just over \$20,000, had been obligated for her construction. McLaughlin was relieved as captain of the Wave and given command of the Flirt in November; Passed Midshipman John Rodgers became commander of the Wave, his first sea command.²

McLaughlin formulated new operational procedures to be used against the Seminoles while he was in the north. These were discussed many times with Secretary Paulding. Briefly he felt that the blockade and coastal patrols were too passive to affect the Seminoles. Force

must be exerted upon them in their own terrain, and the navy ought to assume a more responsible role in the prosecution of the war. Flat bottom boats and canoes should be added to the schooners and barges already on the coast. The former could carry men and supplies into reaches of the interior not accessible by the streams flowing from the Everglades. The latter, lightly loaded, would be for the actual strike force. This would, he reasoned, make it possible for the navy to bring the war to the Seminoles wherever they might be.

Similar to Lieutenant Powell's plan, McLaughlin wanted the war brought directly to the Indians so as to break down their resistance. In fact, he may have received his initial idea from Powell when the two met at the Haulover in the fall of 1837. At that time, McLaughlin was in charge of a small flotilla of boats transporting army forces along the Mosquito Lagoon. In any case, here was an overall plan of operation utilizing the concept of riverine warfare. An amphibian command, employing a variety of craft to exploit the waterways into the interior of the enemy's country, was his suggestion as to the proper method of dealing with the Indians of the Everglades. It was a procedure designed to bring the war to a people who did not have an industrial complex or military fortifications to be assaulted. It was in fact partisan war against a guerrilla foe.

Paulding immediately directed Mayo, when he first reported the necessity of withdrawing the Poinsett from Florida, to leave his personnel and barges on the coast for McLaughlin's use. That same day the secretary issued McLaughlin his sailing orders. These included the usual exhortations to protect the shipwrecked mariners, to harass the Indians, to cooperate with the military, and a brief paragraph about the treaty rights of Spanish fishermen from Cuba fishing in Florida waters. Commander Mayo's recommendation to divide the Florida naval force into two commands was received after these instructions had been sent. The suggestion, so in keeping with the guerre de course strategy, caused Paulding to modify his original directions. He offered Davis command of the forces which had been entrusted to him by Mayo. McLaughlin was told that that portion of his orders dealing with Mayo's force would be rescinded, if Davis accepted this command.³

Before McLaughlin left Washington he made a final effort to have the navy Signal Books issued to his schooner force, and this time he was successful.⁴ It was another step towards integrating the naval forces in Florida into a close knit command. Early in January, 1840, the Flirt at Washington and the Wave at New York departed for a rendezvous in Florida. McLaughlin stopped at Charleston, South Carolina, to pick up some canoes,

and at St. Augustine for some flat bottom boats which had been ordered,

Tea Table Key was to be his base of operations, and the Flirt sailed directly there from St. Augustine to off load supplies. Here the sailors were to be exercised in the use of small arms, boats, and canoes before making any assault upon the Everglades. Lieutenant Davis had been invited to meet him there so that they could plan how best to utilize their two forces. At this conference Davis decided to give up his command. The seamen, marines, barges, and equipment were turned over to McLaughlin. The naval forces in south Florida were again under one command, and this was the beginning⁵ of the mosquito fleet.

General Jesup, as early as the spring of 1837, had suggested importing Cuban bloodhounds to track down the Seminoles, but the army had never carried out his suggestion. In 1838, Secretary Folssett authorized General Taylor to procure dogs although the General does not seem to have acted upon that scheme. On the other hand, Governor Call and the Florida legislative council did import thirty-three dogs that year and set up a camp in Middle Florida for their training. In January, 1840, Governor Reid, then the chief executive of the territory, offered Taylor some bloodhounds to assist him in his military operations. Two dogs were accepted, but Taylor later reported they had been trained

to track Negroes and were ineffective against Indians. Congress was opposed to such tactics when the facts became known.⁶

McLaughlin's sailing orders contained permission for him to purchase bloodhounds in Cuba, "not to hunt down and destroy the Indians, but to be employed in scouring the bank of the Streams or inlets . . . to guard against ambuscades."⁷ When McLaughlin wrote to the secretary in January that he was going to Havana to get the dogs, Paulding warned him again that they were to be used only to protect the force from ambush. A week later he rescinded permission to use the dogs under any circumstances, citing the public clamor as his reason for the change. Two months later Paulding shifted once more, leaving it up to McLaughlin whether or not the animals were to be used. The lieutenant elected to employ them, but found out that they were of no aid in the watery haunts of the Everglades.⁸

Two surveillance barriers were set up, the schooners along the reef and the barges close to the mainland. The Otsego cruised the west coast of the glades while the Wave covered the east coast. The Flirt held the center position sailing between Tea Table Key and Key West so that McLaughlin would have frequent meetings with his subordinates. The barges were placed under Passed Midshipman Montgomery Lewis, who was ordered to cover the reef from Cape Sable eastward between the keys and the mainland.

The first penetration of the glades was to be made from one of the rivers flowing into the west coast. This would, McLaughlin felt, surprise the Seminoles, because all previous attempts by the navy had been made from the east coast. He further reasoned it would be easier for his expedition to emerge on the familiar east coast, rather than the virtually unexplored west coast. Also, the shoreline was open and less hindered by small keys on the east coast, which would make contacting the schooners less of a problem.

A rendezvous at Cape Sable was ordered for April 10, 1840. From there the group would sail north forty miles to Lostman Key for the actual penetration. Just after the group assembled, McLaughlin and some of his crew came down with the fever and the expedition was called off. The Flirt headed for the Pensacola Naval Hospital with all of the sick on board. Meanwhile, Lieutenant John Rodgers was to continue preliminary explorations along the west coast while the schooners and barges resumed their stations.

Shortly before the expedition was cancelled, as the sailors from the Otsego were examining the coast, they ran into a large war-party of about fifty to eighty warriors. The twenty-four sailors and marines assumed a defensive formation on the beach, about five in the afternoon, and returned a spirited fire. During the skirmish, which lasted two and a half hours, the sailors

saw two or three warriors fall. The firing attracted the attention of the Wave and Flirt and both vessels sent reinforcements. The Seminoles, seeing the additional boats approaching, withdrew taking their fallen with them. When it was over there was no way of assessing the damage done to the enemy. There were no fatalities among the naval personnel.

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Lieutenant McLaughlin kept his vessels on station guarding the various passageways through the reef while the barges kept a close check on the shore. At the same time small parties were sent out to explore and chart the western portion of the glades. More than half of that territory had been mapped by summer when his attention was directed to the east coast. Reports reached the mosquito fleet that a Negro named John, who had been a slave of Doctor Crews before he had been captured by the Indians in 1835, had recently escaped and turned himself in to the army at Fort Dallas. John claimed to know the Everglades well, and he offered to lead the army to the Indian camps hidden there. The army did not appear interested in his offer for they kept him locked up. Since McLaughlin thought that John was just the guide to lead his expedition, he sailed for the east coast where talks were conducted with the Negro who was held in irons at Fort Dallas. John was willing to lead the naval forces to the village of Chakaika's Spanish Indians deep in the interior. McLaughlin made

a request for John to guide his sailors and marines, but Lieutenant H. S. Burton, commanding at the fort, said that he was not authorized to release him. A written request was then submitted through channels for John.

Meanwhile, more talks were held with the Negro before McLaughlin decided to move into the interior following John's general directions. It was a difficult task without the guide. The small streams twisted and turned back upon themselves so often that it was impossible to calculate by course and distance the route traversed. The lieutenant could not take observations of the heavens to locate himself because the natural horizon was blocked out by the swamp growth. The group bore southwest from its departure point on the Miami River. It was a slow, tedious, and tortuous march. Finally, they reached a palmetto island which was the first firm ground since they entered the glades. Here a positional fix was obtained using an artificial horizon which showed that they were twenty miles from their starting point! McLaughlin calculated that he was about the same distance (twenty miles) east of the most easterly penetration made on previous expeditions from the west coast. This was encouraging information which convinced him that crossings from coast to coast were entirely possible.

The group turned north to explore the terrain on the other side of the Miami River. The whole countryside appeared to be one large lake, one to four feet deep, covered with sawgrass. The force waded and pulled

their boats through matted grass as often as they rode in them. They labored in heat which sometimes reached 120° fahrenheit at midday. Many times at night the sailors slept slumped over the thwarts of the boats because there was no dry ground on which to make camp. At last, after exploring both sides of the Miami River for a distance of about twenty miles, McLaughlin returned to the schooners confident that it was possible to reach any place in the glades, but equally as sure that a competent guide was necessary to locate the Seminoles living there.

Determined to make another attempt at crossing the Everglades from west to east, he sent Lieutenant John Rodgers in the Wave to Cape Romano with eighteen canoes. Rodgers departed August 4, with instructions to stop at the base hospital at Tea Table Key to gather all men capable of manning the expedition. Lieutenant Shubrick was to follow in the Otsego a few days later. The two schooners were staggered to increase the possibility of sighting any enemy along the shore enroute to the cape. McLaughlin remained with the Flirt at Key Biscayne waiting for the steambot from St. Augustine to arrive with an answer to his request for the services of John. ¹¹

Rodgers stopped at the hospital on the sixth and took most of the able-bodied with him. Midshipman Francis K. Murray and five men were left to look after the invalids. That night, after the Wave had left, Chalmers led his band in a daring attack on Indian Key,

just one mile away from the naval hospital. He had crossed thirty miles of open water from the mainland in twenty-eight canoes to bring his band to this settlement. They arrived on the key about two a.m., and the warriors were filling amongst the houses when the alarm was sounded. Most of the seventy inhabitants fled to the schooner Medium, which was anchored in the harbor. The Indians killed thirteen and set fire to most of the dwellings. The most notable victim was Doctor Henry Perrine, who was a physician and botanist interested in introducing tropical plants into Florida. Congress granted him a township on the mainland in 1838 to carry out his experiments, but hostilities prevented him from occupying his land. He moved, with his family, to Indian Key in October of that year to await the end of the war.

At daybreak the Medium brought news of the attack to Midshipman Murray. He set out in his barges manned by his crew of five plus seven volunteers among the ambulatory patients. Murray planned to approach the beach where the Indian canoes were and destroy them with his four pounders. This would cut off Chakaika's means of escape from the key so that when naval reinforcements arrived the Seminoles could be attacked. As he drew near, the Indians gathered on the beach to oppose him. Chakaika even had the settlement's six pounder loaded with musket shot and fired upon the advancing naval forces. One sailor was seriously wounded in the thigh,

but most of the shot rattled harmlessly off the barges. Murray returned fire with his four pounders, which had to be mounted athwartships. At the end of his third discharge the guns recoiled overboard, and Murray had to yield to superior fire power.

Sure Chakaika's band would descend upon the hospital now that his weakness was so apparent, he returned to Tea Table Key to prepare his defense. The Indians, however, loaded their plunder in thirty-four boats, six of them taken from the whites, and left for the mainland at two in the afternoon. Murray estimated between four and eight people were in each boat, and that the total number must have been around 130 to 140 warriors.

McLaughlin received an express from Murray at Key Biscayne the next day. Since the most direct route was through a narrow channel, he decided to go in the Otsego, the smaller of the two schooners. All of the sailors and marines of the Flirt, except for a skeleton crew, were loaded onto the Otsego, which set out immediately for Indian Key. They arrived that night to find Chakaika had plundered the store houses, burned the settlement, and had retired the day before.

The following evening at ten Rodgers heard of the attack while anchored off Cape Romano. A recall was sent to his marines who were on shore. Because of the high seas and the distance of the anchorage from the beach, it was eight the next morning before all hands were back

on the Wave. An hour later she was underway only to become becalmed when the wind dropped and shifted off her bow. Rodgers launched his canoes, manned with sixty officers and men, and left the schooner to paddle towards Indian Key. One of the marine canoes swamped in the high running seas, but the men were saved, the canoe righted, and the group continued, although all of the arms and equipment had been lost from the overturned canoe. The next morning, after twenty-four hours of pulling over open waters, Rodgers arrived at the key too late to render aid and without having sighted any of Chakaika's fleeing band.

McLaughlin immediately cancelled his intended scout of the Everglades and returned to Key Biscayne to get John to lead his force on a punitive expedition against Chakaika. By this time Burton had received Colonel Trigg's reply: "The Negro who recently came into Fort Dallas from the Indians, [is to] be kept in irons, and guarded with the utmost care. . . ." There was no possibility of the mosquito fleet finding the Spanish Indians without a guide.¹²

Chakaika's raid caused great alarm among the inhabitants of the keys. The Otsego was dispatched to Key Vaca to establish a small garrison to aid the settlers. Later Passed Midshipman C. R. P. Rodgers commanded a garrison and barges on Key West. Jacob Housman also demanded that a force be kept on Indian Key. There were

not enough men to continue the primary mission, and man these garrisons and the base at Tea Table Key. McLaughlin reached an agreement with Housman whereby Indian Key was turned over to the navy for the duration of the war with some land reserved for Housman's personal use. When this agreement was signed, the hospital and supply depot were moved to Indian Key where they remained for the remainder
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of the conflict.

The Flirt sailed north to replenish the force. She arrived in Philadelphia in late September for a two month stay, which was disappointing in many ways. Some brass six pound field guns were needed for the barges, but were not available. McLaughlin wanted to add forty more marines to his force, and to equip 100 men with repeating Colt carbines, but both requests were denied by the department. Then, two days before sailing, nine crewmembers had to be sent ashore for medical reasons without being replaced. Thus when the three schooners rendezvoused again at Key Biscayne in December, 1840, for a new campaign season, the expedition was already
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short seventy-two men.

Colonel Harney had wanted to avenge himself against Chalaika for his part in the attack upon Harney's detachment on the Calcoosahatchee River over a year and a half earlier. When Harney heard about John, he prevailed upon the commanding general to release him to lead his expedition into the glades after the Spanish Indians.

Permission was granted and in the first week of December the colonel borrowed sixteen canoes from the mosquito fleet to transport his ninety men into the glades. John took them to a village deep in the swamps where Chakaika felt secure from the white men. Although General Armistead earlier had refused Harney permission to disguise his men as Indians when on patrol, the colonel now violated this order by dressing and painting his force as Seminole warriors. Thus arrayed, they closed in on the village undetected even though it was a few hours after sunrise. The attack came as a complete surprise to the Indians, and in the brief fight which followed Chakaika was killed and his band broken up. The colonel returned to Fort Dallas from a successful raid which took just twelve days. John, who had so unerringly guided them through
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 trackless wastes, received full credit.

Lieutenant John Rodgers, who was in charge while McLaughlin was away, had ample experience in the Everglades on the west coast which made him aware of the futility of searching such terrain without a guide. When he heard of Harney's expedition under the guidance of John, he brought the Wave and Otsego to Key Biscayne with an offer to join forces with the colonel for the next venture. A few days later McLaughlin arrived from the north, approved of Rodgers's actions, and added the men of the Flint to the assembled group. Later in a letter to the secretary he pointed out that he had tried to use John

the previous summer, and, if the Negro had been made available, the naval forces might have attacked Chakaika's band before their raid upon Indian Key; or, if his final request for the guide had been granted, the Seminoles might have been struck before they had had an opportunity to distribute their plunder of powder and lead.

Colonel Hamney reported that, according to his guides, the small Spanish boats hunting turtles frequently brought supplies to the Seminoles. He wanted to know what the navy was going to do about that situation. Lieutenant McLaughlin was aware that the Spanish fishing smacks could not be restricted from Florida waters because of certain treaty rights. He decided to circumvent this by issuing instructions along the keys that his schooners and barges would seize all individuals found on uninhabited shores as suspects engaged in illicit arms trade. Further, the vessel of the suspect would be taken before the U. S. court on the grounds that the illegal actions of the crewmember forfeited the ship's rights granted by the treaty. This was as far as he dared to proceed without additional instructions from Washington.

The garrisons at Key Vacas and Key West had been withdrawn before the commencement of the expedition so that the men could be distributed among the schooners. The Otsego and Wave were to sail along the west coast prepared to pick up the sailors when they emerged, or to supply them with provisions if they remained in the

glades beyond the month planned. The former schooner was to cruise off Cape Sable and the latter off Cape Romano while the Flirt remained to the east along the reef.

Ninety sailors and sixty marines accompanied the twenty dragoons and seventy soldiers of the 3d Artillery when the joint force started from Fort Dallas on the night of December 31, 1840. The group traveled in small five man canoes, except for four or five large canoes which carried ten men each. They were kept in single file about twenty paces apart. Absolute silence was maintained and orders were transmitted by whistles which had been provided for the officers. Each man was given rations for twenty days and sixty rounds of ball cartridge, and the muskets were kept by the thwarts ready to be seized at a moments notice. Colonel Harney decided to move only at night in order to achieve the advantage of surprise. His goal was Sam Jones's village; whereas, McLaughlin planned, not only to assist on this raid, but to continue across the Everglades after borrowing the army's guides when the colonel returned to the fort. Although moving through the swamp in the daylight was slow, in the dark the progress was at a snail's pace. They reached Chitto Tustemuggoe's camp, midway between Little and New rivers, on the third night.

When the island was sighted the signal "to close up" was passed down the line. Silently the canoes

approached and took position around the island. All hands were tense waiting for the next order to "move up and effect a landing." Scouts were sent out to reconnoitre. Some time later they returned to report the enemy had fled - the camp was deserted. The word was passed, "move up and land, the Indians have escaped." For the next few days the force scouted in all directions from its base at Chitto's camp.

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One joint search party led by Lieutenant McLaughlin was sent to a nearby island. Half way to their destination four Indian canoes were sighted headed towards them. The Americans quickly spread out to ambush the unsuspecting Seminoles. When the Indians discovered the trap it was too late to flee, and almost too late to fight. In the exchange of fire three warriors were killed and one wounded, while the Americans suffered one man injured. After the initial exchange of shots the remaining Seminoles, realizing they were outnumbered, abandoned their canoes to seek shelter in the tall grass, every man for himself. The gunfire brought Harncey with the rest of the boats to the scene. The entire joint force, 240 strong, spread out to find the seven warriors in hiding. Five were apprehended that day.

In the evening the Americans learned from their prisoners that Chin, one of the warriors still at large, was a renowned guide of the Everglades. The next day a

party led by Lieutenant Thomas Sloan of the marines and Lieutenant Edward Ord of the artillery picked up and followed a trail for five miles before overtaking and capturing a squaw, Chia's wife. A few yards farther they heard a rustle in the grass and several of the men leaped from the canoes to investigate. Private Smith, USMC, was shot in the side as he cleared the boat. Chia ran off a few paces reloading his rifle with Sergeant Searles, 3d Artillery, in close pursuit. Chia spun around and mortally shot Searles at a range of less than five paces, but the sergeant kept coming. The warrior lashed out with his rifle and struck a heavy blow which caused Searles to buckle. Stunned and wounded, the sergeant lunged forward to grapple with the Indian crying, "I have him." Chia drew his knife and was about to stab Searles when others arrived and overpowered him. As happened often in this conflict, and for unexplained reasons, after his capture Chia consented to act as a guide - and did so for the mosquito fleet for the remainder of the war!

Chia said that Sam Jones was in the cypress swamp north of New River with 100 warriors ready to make a last stand. Harnoy headed in that direction with a detour to Fort Lauderdale where the wounded were to be cared for, the prisoners looked up, and the force rested for two days. Then the colonel led his group into the cypress swamp where no signs were found of Jones or his

camp. When Harney decided to return, he turned his guides Micoo and John over to the navy.

McLaughlin wrote of "the perfect harmony with which the two services blended on this occasion. . . . The movements of the combined force were conducted exclusively by Col. Harney, . . . whilst the associations of the officers of the two services had the effect to increase those refined feelings of respect and good will so conducive to the interests of both, and which should be cultivated with so sedulous a care." ¹⁸ No doubt the naval forces learned much about partisan warfare from Colonel Harney, who had demonstrated his talents many times before, but most especially during his attack upon Chakalka's village.

McLaughlin struck out westward visiting Council Island, Alligator Island, and the Prophet's deserted camp. Near the latter Lieutenant John Rodgers came upon an enemy canoe carrying four people. The warrior, who would not surrender, was killed, while the squaw was captured along with her two children. The group turned south to Chakalka's old camp where they found the skeletons of the Indians killed during Harney's raid lying on the ground undisturbed. The sailors continued south towards Harney's River for their exit to the sea. They emerged on the west coast on January 19, 1841, to become the first group of white men to cross the full width of the Everglades. McLaughlin sent the officers and men of the

Ossago and Wave to their respective rendezvous points while he led the Flirt's crew across Florida Bay to Indian Key.

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From here he wrote to the department requesting more men. Manpower was the mosquito fleet's most pressing problem. Just after the command was formed by the merging of the barge and schooner force, the new commander had to request recruits from the north. At that time enlisted ratings were short throughout the navy and Paulding thought seriously of doing away with this special group in Florida. He penned a note to the secretary of war to see if this force was still considered necessary for the prosecution of the war. Poinsett replied immediately that it was "very important" that the coast should be watched and closely blockaded.

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The unit's personnel problems took many forms. In July, while the Flirt was anchored at Key West, the local sheriff arrested three of the Negro crewmembers who were on shore carrying out ship's business. This was done under a territorial act passed on February 10, 1832, aimed at preventing the migration of free Negroes into Florida. Anxious to clear up this matter while maintaining good relations with the Key's citizens, Lieutenant McLaughlin allowed Francis Stewart, another colored sailor, to be arrested in his presence. He warned the sheriff "to be careful that he was exercising a lawful authority." Immediately after the arrest, he

gave an affidavit of the good character of all of the men and their official reasons for being ashore to Judge William A. Marvin, the United States District judge, along with a request for a writ of habeas corpus. This was granted. Marvin found that the territorial act did not refer to these cases; however, the Negro sailors had to pay costs! The judge warned the sheriff against any future arrests of this nature threatening to levy the cost on the sheriff the next time.

Such actions could have had serious consequences for the mosquito fleet because of the number of Negro sailors involved. All of the servants of the Flirt plus several of the other crewmembers were Negro. McLaughlin wrote to the department that many blacks worked in the boat crews, the watering, and provisioning parties, making it necessary for them to go ashore in the performance of ship's work. Guidance was requested in this matter. In reply, Washington approved of the actions taken, issued a warning to exercise great caution in sending Negroes ashore in Key West, and failed completely to offer any solution to prevent such actions for the future.

The manpower situation grew worse as the summer months passed. Finally, in September, the long term enlistment sailors were distributed among the various commands within the mosquito fleet while the Flirt was manned by those whose enlistments had expired, were

about to expire, or were physically unfit for duty in Florida. With this crew she headed north for replacements. After the sailors were discharged or transferred at Philadelphia, the Flirt's muster roll contained but thirteen men, five of them Negro. Once again McLaughlin tried to get some direction from Washington concerning his conduct if he should have the same harassment from local officials in Florida on his return. This time the department referred vaguely to its original letter to him which offered nothing specific to guide him on any
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 future action.

After crossing the Everglades in January, 1841, seventy-five men were needed to bring the mosquito fleet up to compliment. Paulding wrote that that number of sailors could not be procured in the north, but gave permission to go to Mobile or New Orleans to recruit the force's needs. McLaughlin sailed to Mobile where he was able to ship fifty-one men in April. This allowed him to remain on the coast until June when once again it was necessary to go north to bring back the sick,
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 disabled, and discharged men.

On this trip McLaughlin visited Washington and presented a chart of the Everglades "showing our route of nearly five thousand miles through swamps and morass paddled over in Canoes. . . ." He pointed out that
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 the force now had its own guides, and with sufficient men it could go anywhere in the glades to meet the Seminole warriors.

CHAPTER 8

THE FLORIDA EXPEDITION: A RIVERINE TASK FORCE

A series of events took place between June of 1840, and 1841, which caused the War and Navy Departments to re-evaluate their efforts in south Florida. Colonel Harney captured the mother of Coacoochee in June, 1840, and she led him to a village near the St. Johns River where, according to her, the Indians had a trading establishment supplied by fishing boats from the keys. When this information reached headquarters, General Armstrong wrote to the secretary of war: "The naval command which is understood to have been ordered to Florida for the purpose of intercepting such supplies has so far rendered no service." He went on to comment that the Flirt had too deep a draft to be adapted to the duty required, and then directed some critical remarks at Lieutenant McLaughlin. "How this officer is now engaged I am not informed, having neither seen him nor had a report from his command."¹ (This was the same month in which McLaughlin was to make his first request for John.) Armstrong's letter was forwarded to Paulding who replied that the navy did not have any vessel more suitable, but he

would be pleased to cooperate "in any system of measures
deemed more efficacious."²

The disastrous attack by Chacalike on Indian Key the following month pointed out that the limited naval force in that area was spread too thin to keep the Indians off the open waters among the keys. Poinsett wrote to Paulding: "It was hoped that the cruizers kept upon the coast of Florida would have afforded ample protection to the settlements on the Islands: . . ."³ and suggested that the West India Squadron be ordered to provide a boat expedition to find the Indian canoes and boats which he thought must be hidden along the coast. Both of these events demonstrated the inadequacy of assigning a small naval force to such a long key-studded coastline.

Later, in the winter, the very successful achievements of Colonel Harney and Lieutenant McLaughlin in mastering the Everglades gave ample proof that it was possible to bring force to the Seminoles in their most remote retreats.

Finally, Colonel William J. Worth relieved General Armistead as commander of the army in Florida on May 31, 1841. He proposed to seal off the southern portion of the territory and to exert constant military pressure upon the Seminoles in their Everglade refuge by using his troops as partisans. His instruction to his commanders was succinct, "find the enemy, capture,

or exterminate." ⁴ Early in the summer Worth was asked for his opinion of the value and the role of the navy for the forthcoming year. He was enthusiastic about the naval support and high in his praise of McLaughlin. The lieutenant later sent his thanks along with an outline of his future plans. ⁵

Because of the above events, the War and Navy Departments decided to strengthen McLaughlin's command. More vessels were attached to the blockade force along the southern extremity of the peninsula while additional personnel were assigned to augment the navy's Florida Expedition so that the Seminoles of the Everglades could be both isolated and attacked. Originally the Revenue Service offered the army the cutters Jefferson, Jackson, and Van Buren, but McLaughlin refused the Jackson because of her deep draft (over eleven feet), and so the Madison was substituted for her. The War Department had another schooner, the Phoenix, built at Gardner's shipyard under McLaughlin's supervision. The navy contracted for thirty-five more canoes to be delivered to Indian Key by late August, bringing the expedition's total to a hundred. When the mosquito fleet rendezvoused in the fall it had doubled in size. ⁶

McLaughlin requested and received Signal Books and Telegraphic Dictionaries for all of his vessels. He also proposed that the Flirt's two six pounders be replaced by six eighteen pounder cannonades with

Paixhan shot to be used for clearing a hammock or to cover an opposed boat landing, if the occasion arose.⁷ In addition, emulating Colonel Harney who favored Colt's repeating carbines, he asked that 150 such arms be supplied. From the records available, it is uncertain if the Flirt's armament was changed, but the colt's were provided.⁸

When Lieutenant McLaughlin gathered his strengthened naval force at his base of operations on Indian Key in October, 1841, he immediately began preparations to carry out the colonel's order calling for "activity and enterprise." The Flirt and Otsego were dispatched to patrol along the west coast between the Caloosahatchee River and Cape Sable. The Wave was sent to the east coast. The Madison, Jefferson, Van Buren, and Phoenix, because of their new crews, were given an intensive training period along the Florida reef before being assigned to a cruising station.⁹

Meanwhile, a party of marines and sailors was organized to enter the glades to rendezvous with an army unit at Chakaika's Island. From there the joint force was to conduct a sweep for Sam Jones who, according to army intelligence, was encamped with fifty-seven warriors on the edge of the Big Cypress Swamp. This is a large swamp thirty miles south of the Caloosahatchee River between the Everglades proper and the Gulf of Mexico. It covers an area thirty miles north and south by fifty miles east and west. The vegetation is so dense that

the sun's rays never penetrate to the earth's surface, and water stands with a layer of green slime floating on top. When disturbed, toxic vapors arise causing many men to retch. Within the swamp there are a few ridges or islands where the Indians lived when they were forced away from the pine barrens along the borders of the Everglades.¹⁰ This was the area for the Florida Expedition's first venture of the new campaign season.

The General Order issued to the group reflected the influence of Colonel Harney's partisan tactics of the previous year, dressed in nautical language: "The Expedition about to enter the Everglades will be composed of five detachments. 1st from the Wave, under Lt Comd^t [John] Rodgers - 2nd from the Van Buren, under Lt Comd^t [John B.] Marchand, 3rd from the Otsego, under Lt Comd^t [James S.] Biddle, 4th from the Phoenix, under Lt Comd^t C. R. P. Rodgers, 5th the Marines under 1st Lieut. [Thomas T.] Sloan - . . . The Expedition will always move in single file, unless otherwise ordered. Each detachment will take the place in the line which shall be assigned to it, and each boat will preserve an interval of ten paces between it & its next in the advance. At all times when the boats are underway, the most rigid silence is to be observed. . . . When landing each boat will come to in the order of sailing, to the right or left of its advance as shall be directed. . . . When landing for encampment, each detachment will come to on

the right or left of its advance and four canoe's length distance from it. Each detachment will encamp in front of its boats. . . . No officer or man shall leave the limits of the camp, neither shall a gun be discharged, nor a fire built, at any time without permission. . . ."¹¹

The sailors and marines, 200 strong, entered the Everglades by paddling up the Shark River on October 10, 1841. It took four days to reach Chakaika's Island, a distance of fifty miles. Here they met Captain Martin Burke of the artillery who had earlier departed from Fort Dallas with sixty-seven men. The joint force moved to Prophet's Landing on the eastern edge of the Big Cypress Swamp where small units fanned out to search the vicinity, but no recent indications of Indian activity were found.

While at Prophet's Landing acting Lieutenant C. B. P. Rodgers had a disciplinary problem with Joseph Burgess a boatswains mate and the coxswain of one of his boats. One evening Burgess, who was entrusted with the liquor supply for his boat crew, indulged heavily after grog hours until he became drunk, noisy, and disorderly. Although drunkenness was a rather common offense in the navy at that time, Burgess's case was aggravated because the group was in hostile territory on a combat mission. There was no opportunity to convene a Court Martial under the circumstances so Rodgers held Captain's Mast and awarded the man thirty-six lashes with the cat-of-nine-tails.

This was executed even though it exceeded the twelve lashes allowed to commanding officers by the Act for the Better Government of the Navy of 1800.

Later, when Rodgers had to answer to the secretary of the navy for this excessive punishment, he justified his actions by pointing out that the thirty-six lashes were less than what could have been awarded by a Court Martial for that offense, and the circumstances under which it had been imposed. "I could not dispense with his services," Rodgers wrote, "we were in an enemy's country, the Indians were supposed to be not far from us, . . . I therefore deemed it necessary by a severe & summary punishment to maintain the efficiency of my command, by deterring the seaman of which it was composed, from following the dangerous example set them by their leading man."¹² (The secretary did not approve of Rodgers's actions, but he did not pursue the matter further.)

When it became apparent that no Seminoles were to be found near Prophet's Landing, the two service groups headed southwest through heavy mangrove swamps. They emerged onto a grassy lake with several islands in it and off in the distance two Indians were observed in a canoe. Immediately the chase was on with the enemy leading the pursuers to their camp, which was situated in the midst of a large cultivated area, but by the time the sailors and marines, who were in the advance, arrived

all the Seminoles had departed leaving much of their equipment and three canoes behind. The trail was followed for two days before it disappeared in the trackless wastes of the glades. Then the Americans turned back to destroy the sixty acres of pumpkins, beans, peas, and other food-stuffs the Indians were growing. They then resumed a course southwesterly to emerge from the Everglades about fifteen miles north of Cape Romano. Prior to leaving the expedition to return to the Flirt McLaughlin placed John Rodgers in charge with instructions to continue the scout north to the Caloosahatchee River. The Flirt arrived at Punta Rassa, an army post at the mouth of the Caloosahatchee, on the 26th, the day before Rodgers's force reported aboard. ¹³

During the time they were in the Everglades, the west coast had been buffeted by a gale which had done extensive damage at Punta Rassa. The steamer Igis had been left on dry ground with the receding of the storm waters. The loss of the steamer disrupted communications with Colonel Worth's headquarters at Tampa Bay; therefore, McLaughlin offered the services of his vessel to transport troops and supplies to the battered post.

During this period Worth and McLaughlin drew up plans for another venture into the glades for late November. This was to be a three pronged assault upon the Big Cypress Swamp. The object was to close off the escape routes to the north and east forcing the enemy to retreat into the mangrove swamps to the southwest.

Here the Indians would be caught between the advancing
land forces and the naval vessels patrolling off shore. ¹⁴

Before this could be put into operation army intelligence reported that there had been a quarrel between Sam Jones and the Prophet which caused Jones's band to move out of the Big Cypress Swamp. McLaughlin wanted to bring Jones in willingly, or by force, while he was separated from the Prophet's group. Alleck Yahola and two other Indians who had recently resumed friendly relations with the whites were taken along to act as guides and go-betweens for the naval detachment and the two companies of artillery when they moved into the Everglades on November 3, 1841. (Captain Burke had taken ill and turned his command over to Lieutenant William S. Ketchum.)

This time they proceeded up the Caloosahatchee River to scout the northern sector of the glades. Five days later they discovered a canoe and one of the large boats which had been taken from Colonel Harney's command two years earlier. The Indian guides claimed the tracks were made by about fifty people of the band of Lew-fale Micco. McLaughlin sent Alleck Yahola and Ahha Tusten-nuggee after this group to persuade them to come in. He waited four days before giving up hope of receiving the band, or his former guides. There were plentiful signs of Indians, but the expedition was never able to establish contact with them.

Continuing eastward McLaughlin reached Lake Okeechobee and skirted along the southern shore in the canoes to give his men a rest from the rigors of traveling through the interior. One evening while on the shores of this lake, the expedition's surgeon was permitted to make a fire to prepare prescriptions for the sick. This was the first fire to be built since entering the glades and it was made inside a camp kettle in the surgeon's canoe. Travel along the lake had to be discontinued after three days because the high winds and rough waters swamped several of the canoes.

The group re-entered the Everglades and proceeded eastward to the source of the Locha Hatchie River. Here they turned southward and, under forced marches, headed directly for Key Biscayne so as to be in position on the east coast to participate in the joint operations planned for the end of the month. At the conclusion of this scout, McLaughlin reported to the secretary that "the season has been particularly unhealthy, & the command has suffered severely from its continued activity and exposure. The medical reports show fifteen deaths and eighty cases still under treatment, most of them however I am happy to say are convalescent."¹⁵

In spite of this, Lieutenant McLaughlin prepared¹⁶ to enter the Everglades once again. The Phoenix and Otsego were assigned to cover the passes of the west coast along Biddle's Harbor; the Madison and Wave were to

cruise along the reef; the Jefferson and Van Buren were assigned to patrol the east coast; while the Flirt was to remain at Key Biscayne acting as a depot for the expedition.

McLaughlin departed from the Flirt and reached Prophet's Landing on December 1, 1841, where he established his base camp. Lieutenant John Rodgers, with 150 men, was sent out to penetrate the Big Cypress Swamp on a southwesterly course for twenty-five miles. He was instructed to search every trail discovered and to establish contact with the army troops moving in from the Upper Landing and Fort Keais. Rodgers's group returned five days later after wading waist deep in mud-water nearly all of that time without meeting friend or foe. The assumption was that the Indians must have fled the swamp before the arrival of the military and naval forces.

The following day McLaughlin took twenty-five men to the Upper Landing to find out if the army group under Major Thomas Childs had met with any success. They too had a negative report on enemy movements. McLaughlin returned to his own camp where he received a message from Colonel Worth that Sam Jones was reported to be in the vicinity of the Locha Hatchie on the east coast. The colonel suggested that the naval force might best be used in that area, for the army had over 450 men concentrated around the Big Cypress Swamp.

This presented McLaughlin with a problem because he had only nine days rations for the entire command.

His Indian guide assured him that it would not take more than ten days to reach Fort Pierce on the Indian River, so the men were put on half rations while they retraced their steps across the Everglades towards the Locha Hatchie. Council Island was reached on December 12 where the sick and disabled were detached to return to Key Biscayne; the remainder continued to the northeast. When they entered the cypress swamp near the headwaters of the Locha Hatchie the water was so low that it was almost impossible to traverse the terrain. "It was one continuous portage over stumps & cypress knees, with occasional glimpses of open water." ¹⁸ This continued for six days during which time three Indian canoes were found, but no enemy.

The group arrived back at Key Biscayne on the morning of December 23 without encountering any Seminoles. The only combat casualties occurred when five of the thirty colt rifles carried by the group exploded.

However, the rigors of the movement through the Everglades took a severe toll. At the completion of the expedition fifty men were given medical surveys and sent north, and 100 others were carried on the sick list, almost a quarter of the entire command. McLaughlin commented that "there is no disease of a malignant type known among them, but a general sinking of the system, a 'regular cave-in' of the constitution." ¹⁹ December's attrition rate, due to this sickness, was five deaths. ²⁰

The day the group arrived at Key Biscayne a report was sent to the secretary of the navy that as soon as the steamer Caston could tow the vessels over the bar they would sail south to Indian Key to make arrangements for a new drive into the mangrove swamps of the southern tip of the peninsula. McLaughlin wanted to keep pressure on the Indians. If he could not establish contact with the enemy, he would at least keep them on the move and deny to them the opportunity of planting or harvesting crops for their sustenance. Relief was provided for the sailors of the Flirt and Van Buren by sailing to Havana enroute to Indian Key. Many of the men had been continuously on patrol in the Everglades since their arrival upon the Florida coast, and they were in need of rest and relaxation.

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The R&R was brief. Lieutenant Marchand led a group of 120 men from the Van Buren, Wave, and the marine detachment to explore the area around Coconut Island on January 13, 1842. They tried to enter the glades through three different rivers on the west coast, but low water prevented canoe travel within the swamp and they could not reach their destination. At no time did they find recent signs of Indians.

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The first week in February Colonel Worth shipped 230 captured Indians west. He estimated that there were about 300 free Seminoles still in Florida of which 140 lived in the Everglades. He recommended to Washington

that the military force be reduced and the remaining Indians be allowed to plant undisturbed in the south, for he was convinced that, few as they were, they could not be brought in by force. When this proposal was rejected by the War Department, Worth shifted his efforts northward to protect the settled areas, leaving the mosquito fleet to handle the southern sector. At this time, the colonel offered Fort Dallas to McLaughlin as an advance base. It was accepted, and First Lieutenant Sloan was sent to take command of the post.²³

In the meantime, McLaughlin prepared and submitted a new plan to Colonel Worth. He proposed to divide his remaining force of available sailors and marines into two columns; the two would enter the Everglades from opposite sides of the territory, one to scour the eastern cypress and the reaches of the Locha Hatchie before reaching the rendezvous at Lake Okeechobee, the other group would examine the mangroves, Big Cypress Swamp, and the headwaters of the Caloosahatchee before reaching the lake. With the Indian guides provided by the army, the naval forces would follow every trail which could be found in the hopes of driving the Indians to bay. To increase their time in the field Colonel Worth was requested to deposit provisions at old Fort Center on Fish-eating Creek for naval use. In this way it would not be necessary to leave the glades for re-provisioning. This sweep was expected to continue

throughout February and most of March. All the while the vessels of the Florida Expedition were to be kept on their cruising stations to prevent any aid being given to the Indians from foreign sources, and also to press attacks upon any Seminoles who might try to find rest along the shore or on the keys of the Florida reef.²⁴

Marchand, who was to command the western pincer, was ordered to make another sweep of the extreme southern area on his way to the west coast. He left Fort Dallas on February 11 with a detachment of men from the Van Buren, Phoenix, and Wave, and traveled along the edge of the glades to the southwest searching among the islands to seaward as well as inland. Low water kept the force from making very deep penetrations into the Everglades. On one of the remote keys they found an Indian cache consisting of a large amount of prepared coontie, much clothing, and cooking utensils; all of this was destroyed. Marchand's operations were so delayed that he finally entered the glades by way of Barney's River instead of a more westerly entry. About eight miles from Cocconut Island the group was prevented by low water from proceeding any farther in canoes. Here Marchand halted and erected a base camp.

Acting Lieutenant C. R. P. Rodgers was sent out on a scouting mission to scour the terrain to the southwest of the island. At one point Rodgers abandoned his canoe and proceeded on foot. The day before he returned

to the canoes he came upon three Indians and gave chase. His men were so exhausted from the five hour march of the morning that the Indians had an easy time outdistancing them. Only the two guides Chia and Joe got close enough to fire at the Seminoles, and their shots were ineffectual.

The following day Rodgers sent out small groups to try and pick up the trail. Two camps were discovered nearby. One had been abandoned the previous day and the other just hours before the sailors arrived. At the latter place, the fires were still burning and some of the food was partially cooked. At these places two canoes and large quantities of dried coontie were destroyed. Rodgers estimated there were about sixty or seventy people all told. Trails from both camps led eastward, and Chia speculated that these people were moving towards the coontie grounds along the east coast.

Rodgers returned and told Marchand who decided not to continue to the rendezvous at the Okeechobee, but to follow the Indians eastward. He moved his force to the deserted Fort Henry, which was situated on a small island in the glades southwest of Fort Dallas about midway between Coconut Island and the fort, and here he erected his camp on February 24.

Throughout the month of March Marchand kept small parties constantly on the move in the area from Fort Dallas on the north to Coconut Island in the west. This territory was the narrow strip of coastal land

bordering the Everglades proper. Many of the islands of the glades were still accessible and visited by search parties. There were a few sightings of canoes with one or two Indians in them. Most of the time the Seminoles had to abandon their equipment and take to the underbrush to escape capture. While there were no skirmishes worthy of the name, there was great destruction of Seminole property, especially their cultivated food crops. All of this activity took its toll upon the enemy who now traveled in small family groups, moved constantly, and had to resort to the most basic food gathering techniques for subsistence.

The hardships endured by the sailors and marines were also extreme. Upon completion of one mission C. R. P. Rodger's men returned to Fort Henry "broken down & barefooted."²⁵ Towards the end of this period the men were physically exhausted and Marchand conducted his searches along the coast so that his crew could travel in canoes. He reported, upon his return to Key Biscayne, that for "the last forty days the officers and men under my command have endured great hardships, . . . and in their exhausted state they will be unable to act efficiently for some weeks."²⁶

This scout caused McLaughlin to accept Marchand's supposition that the enemy, estimated to number about 100 people, had retreated to the area around Cape Sable. It then became his intention to keep the Seminoles at

rest in this western pine barrens until his force was ready. Lieutenant Biddle was given a detachment with instructions to move into the southern mangroves and press the Indians back to the barrens, but not to disturb them once they reached that place. It was his task to contain the enemy while the officers and men of the Florida Expedition were gathered and rested before embarking upon this new operation now planned for late April.²⁷

Among the recently returned groups was the eastern pincer led by John Rodgers which had been in the interior since February 15.²⁸ His detachment consisted of the men from the Madison, commanded by Lieutenant William Lewis Horndon; from the Jefferson, under Passed Midshipman George Henry Preble; and some marines, led by Second Lieutenant R. D. Taylor. They had scouted Lake Okkechobee, the Kissimmee River, and Lake Tohopekaliga. During all of this time, about sixty days, their home was a dugout cypress canoe about thirty feet long and four feet wide. It was steered by a large rudder while the men used paddles most of the time, although a small square sail was also provided. Each dugout stowed a six foot locker in the aft section to carry the crew's stores and ammunition. This last was kept sealed in glass bottles to preserve it from the dampness. Generally the officer spread his blankets on top of the locker to sleep at night while the men slept at their thwarts.

The only luxuries added to each canoe were a tent and some awning to partially shield the crew from the sun and rain.²⁹

Rodgers commented: "As an offset to these inconveniences there is a certain wildness about the life which is not without its charm- and then the possibility of meeting with indians never suffers the excitement wholly to flag. . . . I am convinced it is much easier for a civilized man to become savage than for the reverse to take place."³⁰

Although John Rodgers's group found and put the torch to a good many deserted Indian camps and cultivated fields, there was only one occasion when they got close to the enemy. This took place just as the first canoe emerged onto Lake Tohopkeliga from one of that lake's many outlets. Immediately a large fire was seen on the opposite shore. Rodgers, feeling sure that the Seminoles had not detected his force, quickly concealed all of his canoes and waited for darkness before skirting the lake shore to investigate. That night his men made a complete circuit of Tohopkeliga without finding a fire or an enemy camp. The following day a thorough search confirmed the fact that the group had indeed been sighted by the Seminoles.

During Rodgers's scout along the Kissimmee River he reported that at times the surface of the river was covered "by floating grass and weeds, so strongly matted together that the men stood upon the mass, and hauled

the boats over it, as over shoals." He brought his group back to Key Biscayne on April 11, after living for two months in canoes "with less rest, fewer luxuries, and harder work, than fall to the lot of that estimable class of citizens who dig our canals."³¹ While in the glades, Rodgers made use of the army supplies left at Fort Center on Fish-eating Creek, and had left a garrison to protect these supplies when he returned to Key Biscayne. Thus McLaughlin had to send out a party to bring this group in before the next operation.

By the end of April Lieutenant McLaughlin had his forces in motion throughout the southern portion of the Florida peninsula. The most serious problem for the expedition was to obtain enough guides to execute the many tasks being undertaken simultaneously. Lieutenant Biddle had his group at the extreme southern tip of the peninsula to hold the Indians in that direction. Lieutenant Sloan was conducting sweeps from Fort Dallas along the coontie grounds between the Miami and New rivers. Lieutenants Marchand and John Rodgers were sent to the west coast to lead small parties up the streams emptying into Biddle's Harbor, an area not yet visited by white men. Colonel Worth, at McLaughlin's request, had a small group from Fort Pierce sweep the area from its base to Fort Lauderdale. The vessels were on their stations cruising as close to shore as possible while McLaughlin, based upon recent information received from

the Flirt, was preparing an ambush for hostile Indians.

A few days earlier the Flirt had been dispatched to a shipwreck at 26° 26' North, about half way between New River and the Loocha Hatchie on the east coast. The wreck was a large centerboard schooner loaded with flour. She had been burnt and the party from the Flirt could find no information as to the name of the schooner or the fate of her crew, but they discovered that the Indians, who had visited the wreck earlier, had repacked and secreted large quantities of flour in the bushes nearby.

When McLaughlin heard this he immediately set out with the Flirt and Wave to return to the wreck and set an ambush. Ten days the sailors kept vigil near the wrecked schooner waiting for the Indians to return. At last they gave up and destroyed the cache. Later it was determined that the scouts from Fort Pierce, sent out at McLaughlin's request, had caused the Indians to flee from that quarter.

During the return south, scouting parties were kept out to search along the shore. At the mouth of the Hillsborough Inlet they found the trail of two Indians. The sailors followed their signs for two days before coming upon several newly made clearings at the head of the Snake River. Here the Seminoles were cultivating bananas, cane, corn, and many vegetables. Lieutenant John C. Henry, commander of the Wave, was left with his

detachment in concealment near the fields with instructions to remain in hiding for the next ten days. Meanwhile, McLaughlin continued on the trail with the men from the Flint. When the trail was lost they returned to the ship. Six days later Henry arrived aboard the Wave with a report that he had destroyed the cultivated fields, including two others more recently found, but had not contacted the Seminoles.

By the end of May the various groups were reporting back to the base at Indian Key. All had results similar to McLaughlin's and Henry's. First Lieutenant Sloan found five settlements, one of them within five miles of Fort Dallas, between Little River and Arch Creek, which were burned. As soon as his group was discovered by the Indians, signal fires sprang up in all directions and thereafter all the fields and settlements visited were deserted. In all, eight cultivated areas and large quantities of gathered foodstores were destroyed.

Lieutenant Taylor led a group of marines out from Fort Dallas to cooperate with the western detachments of Marchand and John Rodgers. He was compelled to return before a junction was made because of the lack of fresh water. The difficulties met by his group were so great that "Private Kingsbury fell in his trail and died from sheer exhaustion."³² Both Marchand and Rodgers reported the water so low that they had to track their boats and canoes through the mud, roots, and stumps of

the drying swamps over ways constructed from their boat seats. McLaughlin reported: "Service like this could not be of long continuance, without a great sacrifice of men."³³ At the time he was unaware that this was the final naval operation of the war.³⁴

Colonel Worth continued to make requests to Washington that the war be brought to an end and that the few remaining Seminoles be allowed to inhabit the Everglades unmolested. Finally, on May 10, 1842, Secretary of War John C. Spencer notified the commanding general of the army that the field commander in Florida could end hostilities at his discretion.³⁵

As in all of its wars, the United States demobilized rapidly. Secretary of the Navy Able P. Upshur instructed the Florida vessels to return to Norfolk as soon as Colonel Worth determined they could be spared. Thus Lieutenant John T. McLaughlin brought the Flirt, Jefferson, Van Buren, and Madison of the Florida Expedition into the navy base at Norfolk on July 19, 1842, to end the cruise of the navy's first Riverine Task Force.³⁶

CHAPTER 9

EPilogue

The concept of riverine warfare, that is using waterways to invade the enemy's strongholds, was slow to develop during the Second Seminole War. It reached fruition in the operations of McLaughlin's mosquito fleet, especially during the final campaign season. The contrast between the cruiser-commerce-raiding and riverine strategies can be noticed in the operations of the West India Squadron and the Florida Expedition.

The West India Squadron used a passive off shore blockade with single ship assignments, and uncoordinated boat parties. The Florida Expedition used the more aggressive riverine strategy with multiship assignments off the coast, and sustained coordinated canoe treks into the interior. At the end of the war the riverine task force of schooners, barges, and dugout canoes were operating as a team to extend naval power throughout the Everglades.

One of the most critical differences between the two forms of warfare was in attitude. The Squadron continually applied naval solutions to the situation, principally by off shore blockade. Most of its coastal

and river patrols were undertaken for scouting and harassing the enemy. They were not organized or carried out to bring the war to the Seminole nation as were the later search-and-destroy operations. The exceptions were the expeditions led by Lieutenant Powell, yet his major effort in the winter of 1837-1838 was undertaken by the War Department not the West India Squadron. Whereas, the Florida Expedition had for its goal, not merely harassing the enemy, but vigorous partisan activity to bring the war to all of the people of the Seminole nation in order to destroy resistance.

Military tactics also underwent changes. Powell's unit performed the standard maneuver of advancing in line abreast to attack the enemy in the swamp, just as if they were on a formal battlefield. McLaughlin's forces adopted the partisan tactics used so successfully by Colonel Harney.

Both forces engaged in joint operations, but again there was a difference in attitude. Commodore Dallas never lost sight of the fact that the navy was a separate service. While he would cooperate with the army, it was always with this understanding firmly in mind. Even in Powell's joint operations with the army there was a definite undertone of annoyance in his reports at some of the missions he had to perform for General Jesup which took him from what he believed to be his principal purpose. McLaughlin, on the other hand, worked very well with the military commanders,

except for General Armstrong. This may be attributed in part to his background, for he was a young naval officer just starting his career when he volunteered to serve with the army in 1836. Because of two tours of duty with the army in Florida before he was assigned as the commander of the Florida Expedition, it was probably easier for him to work wholeheartedly with the soldiers than more senior naval officers to whom the military operations were strange. This cooperation between the mosquito fleet and the army was best expressed by John T. Sprague, Colonel Worth's aide-de-camp when he wrote: "There was at one time to be seen in the Everglades the dragoon in water from three to four feet deep, the sailor and marine wading in the mud in the midst of cypress stumps, and the soldiers, infantry and artillery, alternately on the land, in the water, and in boats. . . . Here was no distinction of corps, no jealousies, but a laudable rivalry in concerting means to punish a foe who had so effectually eluded all efforts."¹

The U. S. Navy used riverine warfare again during the Civil War principally in its operations on the western rivers. Here the terrain, enemy, and military objectives were quite different from the guerrilla operations in the swamps of south Florida with the result that the form of combat differed. The fundamental objective remained the same, that is, to use internal waterways to bring organized force to the enemy.

Many of the naval officers active in the Seminole War participated in the Civil War, and some of these men continued to exploit riverine warfare. The most notable was John Rodgers who was ordered to special duty in Ohio where he purchased three small steamers which became the nucleus of the Mississippi Flotilla. Later, after participating in the Port Royal expedition, he commanded groups of gunboats on both the Savannah and James rivers.² George H. Preble was captain of the gunboat Katahdin under Farragut and engaged in operations up the Mississippi River to Vicksburg. Near the end of the war he led, with distinction, a naval brigade operating jointly with the army along the Carolina coast preparing the way for Sherman's arrival at the sea.³

Lieutenant McLaughlin, who might have been best qualified by age, temperament, and experience to have organized the naval forces for riverine warfare in the Civil War, died on July 6, 1847, at his home in Washington, a young man of thirty-six.⁴

The practice of riverine warfare was almost forgotten after the Civil War. The Vietnam conflict again provided the necessary geographical setting, and striking similarities may be observed between the naval operations of the Seminole War and the Vietnam War. In spite of the technological changes, the organization and modus operandi are basically the same.

The naval forces operating in and around the Mekong Delta are organized into three functional groups:

Coastal Surveillance, River Patrol, and Mobile Riverine Forces. The first group has the task of patrolling off the coast using a variety of small ships, including Coast Guard Cutters, and corresponds to McLaughlin's schooners off the Everglades. The River Patrol Force brings naval power to the smaller, but still significant inland waterways. Its function can be equated to the gunbarges used among the Florida Keys inside the reef. The Mobile Riverine Forces perform the same search-and-destroy operations against the Viet Cong that the canoe expeditions did against the Seminoles.⁵

"River Raider I" was a Mobile Riverine Force operation conducted in mid-March, 1967, very reminiscent of many of McLaughlin's expeditions. River Assault Squadron 9 transported soldiers from a navy attack transport to the mangrove swamps of the Rung Sat Special Zone within the delta. When the combined army and navy force made contact with the Viet Cong, the enemy offered limited resistance before fading away into the depths of the swamp. The tally at the conclusion of the strike was twelve Viet Cong dead, numerous camps and bunkers destroyed, and the capture of a large number of weapons and supplies.⁶ Riverine warfare, combat neither naval nor military, but a blending of the two, which was first exploited during the Second Seminole War, continues to be an adjunct of U. S. Naval operations today.

NOTES

The following is a key to the abbreviations used.

<u>A&N</u>	<u>Army and Navy Chronicle</u>
AG	Adjutant General
AGLR	Adjutant General, Letters Received
<u>ASPHA</u>	<u>American State Papers: Military Affairs</u>
Capt. ltrs.	Letters Received by the Secretary of the Navy From Captains
Cdr. ltrs.	Letters Received by the Secretary of the Navy From Commanders
CO	Commanding Officer
<u>DAB</u>	<u>Dictionary of American Biography</u>
<u>Exec. Doc.</u>	U. S. Executive Document
<u>HR Doc.</u>	U. S. House of Representatives Document
<u>NCAP</u>	<u>National Cyclopaedia of American Biography</u>
<u>Niles'</u>	<u>Niles' (Weekly or National) Register</u>
Off. ltrs.	Letters Received by the Secretary of the Navy From Officers Below the Rank of Commander
Off., Ships of War	Letters Sent by the Secretary of the Navy to Officers
Records	"Records Relating to the Service of the Navy and the Marine Corps on the Coast of Florida, 1835-1842."

<u>Sen. Doc.</u>	U. S. Senate Document
SN	Secretary of the Navy
ST	Secretary of the Treasury
SW	Secretary of War
SWLR	Office of the Secretary of War, "Letters Received, Main Series, 1801-1870."
SWLS	Office of the Secretary of War, "Letters Sent Relating to Military Affairs, 1800-1889."
SWHLR	Office of the Secretary of War, "Registers of Letters Received, Main Series, 1800-1870."
<u>TP:Florida</u>	Clarence E. Carter, <u>The Territorial Papers of the United States, vols. XXII-XXVI: Florida Territory</u>
<u>USNIP</u>	<u>United States Naval Institute Proceedings</u>

CHAPTER 1

1. The raid upon the Bahamas was carried out on March 3, 1776, by Commodore Esek Hopkins with a fleet of four vessels carrying a marine landing force of 200. Fort Nassau on New Providence Island was taken and quantities of captured munitions were obtained during the two week occupation. On Lake Champlain, the British planned an advance from Canada into New York, and both sides hurriedly built fleets to gain control of the lake. The Americans lost the ship building race (fifteen to twenty-five), but in the ensuing battle at Valcour Island the British timetable was delayed until it was too late to accomplish the projected invasion. The Penobscot Expedition was a joint operation undertaken by Massachusetts' State Navy and the Continental Navy against the British occupying Castine, Maine. On July 25, 1779, the American force (twenty transports and fifteen vessels of the State Navy and three from the Continental Navy) landed in the face of opposition, but the following month a British naval squadron arrived and the Americans fled up the Penobscot River. Eventually two ships surrendered and the remainder were destroyed by their crews, which resulted in a great naval loss for the Americans. Knox, United States Navy, 11-12, 17-18, 32.

2. In 1797, the French Republican naval forces were a serious threat to the British for they included the Spanish and Dutch fleets as well. The French Brest fleet held the center position while the Spanish made up the left wing and the Dutch the right wing. In February of that year, Admiral Sir John Jervis, with fifteen ships, met and defeated a Spanish fleet of twenty-seven sail off Cape St. Vincent. Jervis captured four and seriously crippled ten of the left wing ships. The following October, Admiral Adam Duncan engaged the Dutch, sixteen strong, in a melee and captured nine. The next year, Admiral Horatio Nelson confronted the French fleet off the Nile, where it had transported Napoleon's expeditionary force, and destroyed eleven of the thirteen vessels. Lewis, M., History of the British Navy, 179-82, 188-90.

3. Potter, E., Sea Power, 223.

4. Sprout, American Naval Power, 78.

5. For a more complete discussion of the functioning of the naval organization at this time see Huntington, Soldier and the State, 200 ff.

CHAPTER 2

1. Clinch to AG, 8 Oct., 1P:Florida, XXV, 182-84; SN to Dallas, 29 Oct. 1835, Off., Ships of War.

2. William Cooley's name was also spelled Coolie, Key West Inquirer, 16 Jan. 1836; Browne, Key West, 84; Whitehead to Dallas, 11 Jan., encl. to Dallas to SN, 12 Jan. 1836, Capt. ltrs.

3. Walker to CO, naval yard, Pensacola, 16 Dec. 1835, Car. ltrs.

4. The rank of master commandant was changed to commander in 1837. The Vandalia was a 2nd class sloop of war of the Boston class which was launched at Philadelphia in 1828. She was rated as an 18-gun ship. Her dimensions were: length 127 feet, beam 34 feet, depth of hold 15 feet. She was of 783 ton-burden, and carried three masts. The Vandalia had a long career in the navy serving on many stations. She was one of the vessels with Commodore Perry's expedition to Japan, and later participated in the Civil War. In 1870's she was converted to steam, and was finally wrecked in a hurricane in the Pacific off Samoa, Chapelle, Sailing Navy, 344-45; Fitzpatrick, Naval Vandalia, 147, 257.

5. Eaton to Webb, 27 Dec., 29 Dec., 30 Dec.; vice versa, 29 Dec.; Webb to SN, 29 Dec.; Doughty to Webb, 31 Dec. 1835, Cdr. ltrs.

6. Eaton to Doughty, 19 Jan., encl. to Doughty to SN, 21 Jan. 1836, Off. ltrs.

7. Bolton to CO, Naval Forces, Pensacola, 5 Jan.; Bolton to Bolton, 18 Jan.; Bolton to Webb, 18 Jan.; vice versa, 19 Jan.; Joyner to Bolton, 19 Jan., encl. to Bolton to SN, 18 [sic] Jan. 1836, Capt. ltrs.

8. Webb to Bolton, 28 Jan., 1 Feb.; vice versa, 29 Jan. 1836, ibid.

9. Dallas to SN, 15 Jan., 17 Jan.; Bache to Dallas, 26 Jan., encl. to Dallas to SN, 27 Jan. 1836, ibid.

10. Webb to Dallas, 13 Feb., 22 Feb. 1836, ibid.

11. These fishing ranches were scattered along the west coast of Florida. Their inhabitants, a mixed population of Spanish-speaking Cubans and Indians, harvested and cured fish for the Havana market. From the very commencement of the war some Floridians were concerned that Cuban arms would reach the Seminoles through the Spanish Indians who worked the various fishing ranches. In a letter published in the Tallahassee Floridian, W. Wyatt remarked: "Three years ago when I examined this country, I met with a class of Indians in Towns and at fisheries, who seemed to know nothing about white people except the Spaniards, with whom they were intermixed. The Spaniards having Squaws for wives and the Indian men and half-breeds engaged as fishermen and sailors. . . . If those Indians are not encompassed on the land side by blockhouses; and on the water by armed vessels or boats, so as to break up all communication between them and those Spanish fishermen, and our runaway Negroes, they may keep up a petty war with us for the next 5 years, . . ." Floridian, 13 Feb. 1836. The Indian Agent Wiley Thompson felt, based upon hearsay, that these ranches were composed of a "lawless, motley crew; . . . [who] will leave nothing unattempted to induce the Indians to oppose emigration," Thompson to William P. DuVal, 1 Jan. 1835, ASPNM, VI, 454. Captain William Buner [Bunce], an American owner and operator of a fishing rancho at Tampa Bay, held a more favorable view. Buner to Thompson, 9 Jan. 1835, ibid., 484-85. From a legal point of view, Judge August Steele felt that these rancho Indians were excluded from the general Indian emigration, Steele to Thompson, 10 Jan. 1835, ibid., 494. See also Dodd, "Captain Bunce's Tampa Bay

Fisheries, 1835-1840"; Covington, "A Petition From Some Latin-American Fishermen, 1838," and his "Trade Between Southwest Florida and Cuba"; Neill, "The Identity of Florida's 'Spanish Indians'."

12. Lindsay to Webb, 14 Mar.; Jones to Webb, 18 Mar., encl. to Dallas to SN, 9 Apr. 1836, Capt. ltrs.; Floridian, 9 Apr. 1836.

13. Webb to Dallas, 2 Apr. 1836, Records, 50-52.

14. Acting Sailing Master (Passed Midshipman) Stephen Clegg Rowan was born near Dublin, Ireland, on December 25, 1808. His parents settled in Ohio and he was appointed a midshipman from that state on February 1, 1826. Serving as a lieutenant along the California coast during the Mexican War, he later published his recollections of that war in the USNIP, XIV, 1838. During the Civil War he remained with the Union navy and for his actions along the North Carolina coast he was made captain and commodore on the same day, July 16, 1862. He became commander-in-chief of the Asiatic Squadron, 1868-1870, with the rank of vice admiral. He retired February 26, 1889, and died the following year on March 31, 1890, in Washington. Lewis, C., "Stephen Clegg Rowan," DAB, XVI, 196-97; "Obituary," New York Times, 1 Apr. 1890.

15. Levin Mynn Powell was born in Virginia on April 8, 1798. He was appointed a midshipman in 1817, and lieutenant in 1826. In addition to his services in Florida related here, he was commanding officer of the brig Consort and surveyed the coast from Appalachicola to the Mississippi River in 1840-1841. During the Civil War he commanded the USS Peterson from August 20, 1861, to June 29, 1862, on blockade duty in the Gulf of Mexico. He was appointed rear admiral on the retired list in 1869, and died in Washington, D. C., January 15, 1885. There has been some confusion among various biographical sources as to Powell's middle name and the year of his birth. In a petition for a naval academy, issued by the commissioned and warrant officers of the USS Constellation, he signed his full name as Levin Mynn Powell, the petition follows the letter of 25 Jan. 1839, Off. ltrs. The year of his birth is taken from his service record, "Levin M. Powell," Officers' Service Abstracts, 1798-1893, Navy Department, Records of the Bureau of Naval Personnel, Record Group 24, National Archives. "Levin Mynn Powell," NCAB, I, 383; Reco. Doc. 226, 27 Cong., 2 sess., passim; Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the

Rebellion, Series I, Vols. I, IV, XVI, XVII, XVIII, XXVII, passim; "Obituary," New York Times, 17 Jan. 1885.

16. The provisions listed are based upon those provided for Lieutenant E. T. Doughty's expedition in January, 1836, and pro-rated for Powell's group of forty-two men for a period of ten days, Doughty to Webb, 31 Dec. 1835, Cdr. ltrs.

17. The Vandalia carried a launch and four cutters of the following dimensions:

	length	beam	depth	oars
launch	29'	7' 4"	3' 4"	16
cutter	24'	6' 6"	2' 8"	10
cutter (two)	25'	6'	2' 3"	12
cutter	24'	5' 10"	2' 2"	10

Chapelle, Sailing Navy, 504 and 508; Vandalia ship's log, 17 Mar. 1836, Records, 135.

18. Powell to Webb, 28 Mar. 1836, ibid., 44-45.

19. Powell to Webb, ibid.; Vandalia ship's log, 28 Mar. 1836, ibid., 135.

20. Jones to Webb, 1 Apr., encl. to Dallas to SN, 9 Apr. 1836, Capt. ltrs.

21. Vandalia ship's log, 31 Mar. 1836, Records, 136.

22. Lindsay to Webb, 21 Mar., encl. to Dallas to SN, 9 Apr. 1836, Capt. ltrs.

23. A search of contemporary maps of Florida during this period failed to identify Josefa Island, yet Powell mentions it in his report and again in connection with a later expedition, Powell to Webb, 17 Apr., Records, 56-57; Powell to Crabb, 8 Dec. 1836, ARK, IV, 298-99.

24. Powell to Webb, 17 Apr. 1836, Records, 56-57.

25. Dr. H. B. Crews (Crawe) appears to have been a frontier entrepreneur interested in many projects. Before moving to Charlotte Harbor he lived in Webbville, Florida, where he had been appointed one of the trustees for the school lands for Jackson County in 1832. Later that year, although recommended by the Seminole Chief Mound, he was unsuccessful in receiving a position as physician on the government-sponsored Seminole exploring party to view the western lands assigned to them. Finally, he had been one of the contractors associated with repairing and repaving of the road from Tallahassee to Pensacola, TP:Florida, XXIV, 568-59, 740, 786, 788-89.

26. Pensacola Gazette, 30 Apr.; Key West Inquirer, 30 Apr. 1836. It was later determined that Dr. Crews and a Spaniard had been killed by an Indian while all three were on a hunting expedition. The Spaniard and Indian were employed by Crews at the time of the murders, Key West Inquirer, 7 May 1836.

27. Potter, W., War in Florida, 179-80; Cohen, Florida Campaigns, 193.

28. Webb to Dallas, 12 Apr., reprinted in the Pensacola Gazette, 23 Apr.; Pencil to Webb, 17 Apr., Records, 56-57; Smith to Scott, 26 Apr., ASPHA, VII, 290; Mix to Dallas, 30 Apr. 1836, Records, 54-55.

29. Bunce to Mix, 10 Apr., encl. to Dallas to SN, 20 May; Mix to Dallas, 30 Apr., encl. to Dallas to SN, 7 May 1836, Capt. ltrs.

30. Dallas to SN, 3 Jul. 1836, ibid.

31. Call to Mix, 19 Jun.; Baldwin to Adams, 12 Jun.; Adams to Mix, 24 Jun., encl. to Dallas to SN, 14 Jun. 1836, ibid.; Floridian, 18 Jun. 1836.

32. Housman, et al. to Dallas, 16 Jun., encl. to Dallas to SN, 24 Jun., Capt. ltrs.; Floridian, 16 Apr. 1836; ASN, III, 13.

33. The gudgeon was the support by which the rudder was hung on the stern post. A jury-rig is a temporary repair, and the sweeps were long oars used as rudders.

34. Niles, LI, 181-82.

35. Mix to Dallas, 23 Jul., encl. to Dallas to SN, 1 Aug.; Mix to Dallas, 5 Aug., Mix to Leib, 7 Jul., Mix to Day, 1 Aug., encls. to Dallas to SN, 7 Aug.; Leib to Dallas, 17 Aug., encl. to Dallas to SN, 19 Aug. 1836, Capt. ltrs.

36. Mix to Dallas, 23 Jul., encl. to Dallas to SN, 1 Aug. 1836, ibid.

37. Mix to Dallas, 5 Aug., encl. to Dallas to SN, 7 Aug.; McKinstry to Mix, 10 Jul., encl. to Dallas to SN, 11 Aug. 1836, ibid.

38. The Major Dade's dimensions were: length 134 feet, beam of boat 19 feet, overall beam 37 feet, depth of hold 6 feet. In smooth water she could make nine miles per hour. The American was somewhat smaller than the Major Dade, Hunter to Bolton, 6 Jun., encl. to Bolton to SN, 13 Jun. 1837, ibid.

39. SW to SN, 24 May, SWLS; SN to Dallas, 25 May, Records, 6-7; vice versa, 10 Jun.; Dallas to Call, 10 Jun., encls. to Dallas to SN, 3 Jul.; Dallas to SN, 14 Jun., 20 Jun., 26 Jun., 30 Jun., 8 Jul.; Dallas to Call, 2 Jul., encl. to Dallas to SN, 3 Jul.; Scott to Dallas, 1 Jul., encl. to Dallas to SN, 16 Jul. 1836, Capt. ltrs.

40. Bachs to Dallas, 22 Jul., encl. to Dallas to SN, 30 Jul. 1836, ibid.

41. Howison to Dallas, 15 Aug., encl. to Dallas to SN, 31 Aug. 1836, ibid.

42. Warning is to move a vessel by hauling on a line attached to a buoy, anchor, or fixed object.

43. Semmes to Dallas, 11 Oct., encl. to Dallas to SN, 19 Oct. 1836, ibid.

44. Call to SW, 2 Dec., TP, Florida, XXV, 351; Semmes to Dallas, 11 Oct., encl. to Dallas to SN, 19 Oct., Capt. ltrs.; Semmes to SN, 23 Nov., Off. ltrs.; vice versa, 8 Dec. 1836, Off., Ships of War.

45. Dallas to SN, 31 Aug., Capt. ltrs.; SW to SN, 3 Aug., SWLS; SN to Dallas, 5 Aug., Off., Ships of War; SN to SW, 4 Oct. 1837, SWLS.

CHAPTER 3

1. NCAB, VIII, 307; Appleton's Cyclopaedia, II, 58-59; Allen, West Indian Pirates, 69.

2. Whitehead to Dallas, 11 Jan., encl. to Dallas to SN, 12 Jan. 1836, Capt. ltrs.

3. Key West Inquirer, 16 Jan.; Dallas to Rousseau, 13 Jan. 1836, Capt. ltrs.

4. Dallas to SN, 15 Jan., 17 Jan. 1836, ibid.

5. Dallas to SN, 5 Feb., 14 Feb., 19 Feb., 11 Mar., 3 Apr. 1836, ibid.

6. Dallas to SN, 8 Apr. 1836, ibid.

7. Ibid.

8. Dallas to SN, 21 Apr., 23 Apr. 1836, ibid.

9. Dallas to SN, 20 May 1836, ibid.
10. SW to SN, 20 Jan., SWLS; SN to Dallas, 21 Jan. 1836, Off., Ships of War.
11. Dallas to SN, 20 Jun. 1836, Capt. ltrs.
12. Extract from Webb to Dallas, 13 Mar., in Dallas to SN, 3 Jul. 1836, ibid.
13. Dallas to SN, 11 Oct. 1837, ibid.
14. Dallas to SN, 17 Oct. 1837, ibid.
15. Dallas to Babbitt, 24 Sep. 1838, encl. to Babbitt to SN, 21 Jun. 1839, Cdr. ltrs.
16. SN to Dallas, 24 Feb. 1836, Off., Ships of War.
17. Dallas to SN, 5 May 1836, Capt. ltrs.
18. SW to SN, 24 May, SWLS; SN to Dallas, 25 May 1836, Records, 6-7.
19. Dallas to SN, 20 May 1836, Capt. ltrs.
20. Dallas to SN, 20 Jun. 1836, ibid.
21. Jacob Houseman, et al. to Dallas, 16 Jun., encl. to Dallas to SN, 24 Jun. 1836, ibid.
22. SN to Dallas, 9 Jan. 1836, Off., Ships of War.
23. SW to SN, 30 Jan. 1836, SWLS.
24. Call to Dallas, 26 May, encl. to Dallas to SN, 3 Jul. 1836, Capt. ltrs.
25. Dallas to SN, ibid.
26. Call to Dallas, 25 Jun., encl. to Dallas to SN, 3 Jul. 1836, ibid.
27. Dallas to Call, 2 Jul., encl. to Dallas to SN, 3 Jul. 1836, ibid.
28. Dallas to SN, ibid.
29. SN to Dallas, 16 Jul. 1836, Off., Ships of War.

30. Dallas to Mix, 18 May 1836, Capt. ltrs.
31. Mix to Wilson, 26 May, encl. to Dallas to SN, 6 Jul. 1836, ibid.
32. Mix to Wilson, 28 May 1836, ibid.
33. Wilson to Mix, 30 May 1836, ibid.
34. Dallas to SN, 6 Jul. 1836, ibid.
35. SN to Dallas, 27 Jul. 1836, Off., Ships of War.
36. Dallas to SN, 2 Jan. 1837, Capt. ltrs.
37. Dallas to SN, 18 Sep. 1837, Records, '88.
38. Dallas to SN, 2 Oct. 1836, Capt. ltrs.

CHAPTER 4

1. Mix to Dallas, 6 Aug., encl. to Dallas to SN, 7 Aug. 1836, Capt. ltrs.

2. Call to Dallas, 14 Sep., TP:Florida, XXV, 331-32; Dallas to SN, 2 Oct. 1836, Records, 76.

3. Dr. E. Frederick Leitner was a German-born physician and naturalist who had resided in Charleston, S. C., for the previous seven years and had spent much of his time investigating the fauna of southern Florida, A&N, VI, 181; Motte, Journey, 184, 299.

4. Stephen R. Mallory, Sr., later Confederate secretary of the navy, obtained leave from his position as customs inspector to accompany Powell. In his diary he presents this expedition as a cheerful, care-free lark, quite contrary to most reports: "I had a very pleasant and somewhat independent position assigned to me, with the command of a fine body of seamen, and my superb long, center board schooner-rigged whaleboat, and our party was most successfully employed from Jupiter River to Tampa, through the Everglades and around the coast, beating up the quarters of the Indians ashore and afloat. . . . From the pleasant climate as from half aquatic, half hunting sort of service, and the pleasant association of the officers the campaign was to me a most agreeable one. In the fall following I again joined Capt. Powell in a similar service, over the same ground, with a larger force, which rendered

timely aid to the coast. You have heard me often refer to the exciting incidents of the Indian service; though I never killed or wounded an Indian, I enjoyed capital health, good spirits, and reaped much useful experience, self reliance, and benefit generally from my service." Clubbs, "Stephen Russell Mallory," 52.

5. John Walton, also spelled Walton, was the keeper of the Carysfort Reef lightship; he was killed by Indians the following year in the same garden, Florida Herald, 21 Jul. 1837; Browne, Key West, 87.

6. Charleston Courier, 3 Nov.; Floridian, 26 Nov. 1836.

7. Captain Jacob Housman was a notorious wrecker who owned Indian Key. A few citizens of Monroe County claimed that "the undersigned know that petitions with numerous signatures have been sent to Congress, praying for a port Entry at Indian Key. . . . In one instance it is known, that men, constituting a large expedition against the Indians, under the command of Lieut. Powel [sic], of the U. S. Navy, signed one of these petitions at Indian Key, several times over, with different signatures, for a glass of grog each time," The Florida, XXV, 252-53. Powell confirmed this accusation in a letter to William A. Whitshead on September 11, 1837, Sen. Doc., 140, Appendix A, 7. See also Dodd, "Jacob Housman."

8. The name Everglades was not used on maps until 1823, Hanna, Lake Okechobee, 33.

9. Powell to Crabb, 8 Dec. 1836, A&N, IV, 298-99.

10. Ibid.; Powell to Crabb, 18 Oct., 26 Oct., Cdr. ltrs.; Vandalia ship's log, 13 Oct., 9 Dec., 15 Dec. 1836, Records, 137, 139.

11. Dallas to SN, 23 Dec. 1836, ibid., 78.

12. Powell to SW, 24 Sep. 1837, P-898, SWLR.

13. Powell's memorandum, 10 Oct. 1837, P-919, ibid.

14. Powell to SN, 29 Nov. 1837, Off. ltrs.

15. Mahon, Seminole War, 191 ff.

16. SW to Powell, 14 Oct.; SW to Jesup, 14 Oct. 1837, SWLS.

17. Jesup to SN, 29 Oct. 1837, HR Doc. 78, 25 Cong., 2 sess., Appendix, 188-89.

18. SN to Dallas, 1 Nov. 1837, Records, 11.

19. Powell to Dallas, 2 May, encl. to Dallas to SN, 16 Jul. 1838, Capt. ltrs.

20. Mahon, Seminole War, 219-20.

21. The Haulover, or Sands Point, was the site of Fort Ann during this war. Because this was a gathering point for late pioneers moving south, the town of Titusville sprang up a few miles south of the Haulover, Hellier, Indian River, 11.

22. Motte, Journey, 168.

23. Joseph E. Johnston, later a Confederate general, was graduated from West Point and resigned his commission May 31, 1837. While waiting for re-appointment he volunteered for duty in Florida. Johnston later accepted a commission as first lieutenant in the topographical engineers in June, 1837, and he was cited for his actions during the Florida War, Heitman, Historical Register, 1, 578.

24. Powell to Dallas, 2 May, encl. to Dallas to SN, 16 Jul. 1838, Capt. ltrs.

25. Ibid.

26. The Battle of Okeechobee is described in Mahon, Seminole War, 227-30. Powell departed for the interior before the news of the battle reached Jupiter Inlet, Motte, Journey, 178-80.

27. Powell to Dallas, 2 May, encl. to Dallas to SN, 16 Jul. 1838, Capt. ltrs.

28. The title of captain is generally accorded to commanding officers in the navy regardless of their rank. Niles, LXXX, 401.

29. Later reports indicate that Dr. Leitner did not die at this time, but was captured by the Indians and subsequently killed by them, Motte, Journey, 184-85.

30. The conduct of the battle of Jupiter River is derived from many sources. The following are the most pertinent. Lieutenant Powell's reports: Powell to Dallas, 17 Jan., Niles, LXXX, 368; Powell to SN,

27 Jan., 6 Feb., Off. ltrs.; Powell to Dallas, 2 May, encl. to Dallas to SN, 16 Jul. 1838, Capt. ltrs. Surgeon Motte, who was at the camp on the Indian River Inlet, and Surgeon Jarvis, who received his information three days later at Camp Loyd, both basically agree with Powell's reports, Motte, Journey, 182-84; Jarvis, "Diary," 38-40.

31. Jarvis, ibid., 46; A&N, VI, 159-60; Mahon, Seminole War, 210, 233-34.

32. Powell to SN, 6 Feb. 1838, Off. ltrs.

33. A&N, VI, 220; Shappee, "Fort Dallas," 20-24.

34. Sam Jones, as he was known to the Americans, was a medicine man over seventy years old who had an intense hatred for the white man, Mahon, Seminole War, 127-28.

35. Jesup to Dallas, 5 Mar. 1838, Records, 92.

36. Powell to Dallas, 2 May, encl. to Dallas to SN, 16 Jul. 1838, Capt. ltrs.; A&N, VI, 268-69; Niles', LIV, 49; Sprague, Origin, 195-96; Floridian, 21 Apr. 1838.

37. Howard to Dallas, 26 Apr., encl. to Dallas to SN, 3 May 1838, Capt. ltrs.

38. Powell to SW, 26 Apr. 1838, P-1314, SWLR.

CHAPTER 5

1. Jesup to SW, 10 Aug. 1837, TP:Florida, XXV, 416.

2. SN to Dallas, 6 Sep., Off., Ships of War; vice versa, 11 Oct., 17 Oct., 4 Dec. 1837; Peck to Dallas, 15 Jan., encl. to Dallas to SN, 15 Jan. 1838, Capt. ltrs.

3. Florida Herald, 22 Jul. 1837; Williams, Territory, 271; Browne, Key West, 87.

4. Hanna, Florida's Golden Sands, 114-15; A&N, VI, 315-16.

5. SW to SN, 18 Jan., SWLS; SN to Dallas, 20 Jan., Records, 11-12; vice versa, 26 Mar., Capt. ltrs.; Taylor to Howard, 22 Jun. 1838, T-169, AGLB.

6. Mahon, Seminole War, 247; Taylor to Howard, 22 Jun. 1838, T-169, AGLA.

7. McLaughlin had volunteered to serve in the army in October, 1836. He had been attached to Lieutenant Colonel A. C. W. Fanning's command, and he had been wounded in an engagement on Lake Monroe, Florida, on February 8, 1837, which had incapacitated him for six months. In September he again requested duty with the army. This time he served on the east coast transporting troops along Indian River and its lagoons in small boats. McLaughlin to SN, 28 Oct., 23 Dec. 1836, 5 Sep. 1838, Off. ltrs.; vice versa, 1 Nov. 1836, Off., Ships of War; Sprague, Florida War, 168-70; Motte, Journey, 153-55.

8. The waist is the portion of the deck between the forecastle (forward) and quarterdeck (after deck behind the main mast).

9. McLaughlin to SW, 31 May, encl. to SW to SN, 1 Jun., SWLS; SN to SW, 4 Jun., N-294, SWJR; vice versa, 11 Jun., SWLS; McLaughlin to SN, 9 Jun. 1838, Off. ltrs.; A&N, VII, 27.

10. McLaughlin to SN, 21 Aug. 1838, Off. ltrs.

11. The Alma was a 73 foot, 118 ton schooner built at Alma, Maine, 1835, WPA, Ships Registers of Port of Philadelphia, I, 31. Samuel Pierce lists the Alma as a brig built at Alma, 1831, "Inspection List of 360 Vessels Belonging to the District of Portland, Made up to October 1st 1837, by Samuel Pierce, Inspector," manuscript from the original by Robert B. Applebee, Historian of the Penobscot Marine Museum, Searsport, Maine. This is in the possession of Mr. Applebee.

12. The Alabama was a 42 foot, 34 ton sloop built at New London, Conn., 1837; the Caution was a 46 foot, 44 ton sloop built at Stonington, Conn., 1838; the Dread was a 44 foot, 36 ton sloop built at Stonington, 1818, and rebuilt in 1835, WPA, "Ships Registers of Port of New London," National Archives Project, copies in the G. W. Blunt White Library, Marine Historical Association, Mystic, Conn. These vessels must have been among the early Connecticut fishing smacks which began spending the winters in the Gulf of Mexico in the 1830's and developed trade with Cuba, Coode, Fishing Industries, I, 595.

13. Niles, LV, 102-03.

14. The Seminoles were armed with small bore rifles of Spanish design produced in Cuba. Because of its small hitting power the American casualties were generally light, Mahon, Seminole War, 120-21. This fact possibly explains Wyer's amazing physical abilities after being wounded.

15. Letters by Wyer, 3 Oct. 1838, and Cammett, n.d., quoted from the Portland Advertiser, reprinted in the Bangor Daily Whig & Courier, 20 Oct. 1838; statements made by Wyer and Cammett quoted from the Evening Mercantile Journal, reprinted in the Bangor Daily Whig & Courier, 30 Oct. 1838.

16. Faunce identifies his guide only as Mr. Eagan. Years later E. Z. C. Judson, whose pen name was Ned Buntline, wrote an article about his adventures as the executive officer of the Otsego in 1840. He mentions "Jim Eagan, our coast pilot, an old Floridian" as a civilian with the navy during the war. The Eagans were among the first settlers in the Miami area. John Eagan, the father, received his Spanish grant of land in 1808, Hollingsworth, Dade County, 25-26; Pond, "Ned Buntline," 24-25.

17. McLaughlin to SN, 19 Sep.; Faunce to Coste, 19 Sep.; Coste to Dallas, 19 Sep., Cdr. ltrs.; McLaughlin to SN, 20 Sep.; Coste to SN, 27 Oct. 1838, Off. ltrs.

18. McLaughlin to SN, 20 Sep. 1838, ibid.

19. McLaughlin to SN, 1 Jul. 1842, ibid.

20. Coste to SN, 26 Dec.; Shubrick to McLaughlin, 1 Dec., encl. to McLaughlin to SN, 23 Dec. 1838, ibid.

21. Taylor to McLaughlin, 22 Jan. 1839, T-49, ACLR; McLaughlin to SN, 1 Jul. 1842, Off. ltrs.

22. Page to SN, 31 Oct. 1838, Cdr. ltrs.

23. SN to SN, 15 Oct. 1838, SNLS.

24. SW to SN, 4 Apr. 1839, ibid.

25. SW to McLaughlin, 24 Jul. 1838, ibid.

26. ST to SW, 5 Jul., T-920, SNLRL; SN to SW, 11 Jul., N-316, ibid.; Dallas to SN, 25 Jul., Capt. ltrs.; vice versa, 10 Aug., Off., Ships of War; SW to Coste, 10 Aug. 1838, TP:Florida, XXV, 527.

27. Coste to SN, 26 Dec. 1838, Off. ltrs.
28. McLaughlin to SN, 4 Sep., ibid.; vice versa, 6 Sep. 1839, Off., Ships of War.

CHAPTER 6

1. Mahon, Seminole War, 255-57; Sprague, Origin, 228-29.
2. The French blockade took place during the so called "Pastry War" (Guerra de los Pasteles) between France and Mexico in 1838. It was the result of riotous conduct by Mexican soldiers who destroyed a bakery owned by a Frenchman some five years before. The original damage was about 1,000 pesos, but with the passage of time this claim had grown to 60,000 pesos. By 1838, the baker's and other French demands amounted to 600,000 pesos, which the Mexican government refused to satisfy. The French minister asked for his papers on April 20, 1838, and, before the month had ended, the French fleet arrived to blockade the Mexican coast. Admiral Baudin waited for cool weather before landing on the fever coast at Veracruz on November 27, 1838. Two weeks later as the French forces were withdrawing, Santa Anna, who had come out of political retirement, led some Mexican forces in a charge upon the departing Frenchmen and lost his leg in the ensuing skirmish. This restored Santa Anna to the limelight, and launched him upon another political venture in Mexico's turbulent politics, Calcott, Santa Anna, 155; SN to W. B. Shubrick, 25 Jan. 1839, Off., Ships of War.
3. SN to W. B. Shubrick, 5 Apr. 1839, ibid.
4. The Poinsett's dimensions were: length 133 feet, beam 22 feet, depth of hold 9 feet, mean draft of water 6 feet. She had a mean speed of eight knots, and carried a long thirty-two pounder pivot gun, Stuart, Naval and Mail Steamers, 32-33.
5. SN to Mayo, 5 Apr. 1839, Records, 17.
6. SN to W. B. Shubrick, 14 Jun. 1839, Off., Ships of War.
7. Mayo to SN, 17 Jun., Cdr. ltrs.; vice versa, 22 Jun. 1839, Off., Ships of War.

8. Sponsons are projections on the side of vessels to increase their stability by creating an increased surface area.

9. Mayo to SN, 17 Jun., 26 Jun., 30 Jun., 3 Jul., 6 Jul., 12 Jul. 1839, Cdr. ltrs.

10. Mayo to Taylor, 12 Jul., encl. to Mayo to SN, 25 Jul. 1839, ibid.

11. Niles', LVI, 355.

12. Mayo to SN, 25 Jul. 1839, Cdr. ltrs.

13. Nahon, Seminole War, 261-64.

14. Cutters are double-banked, square-sterned ship's boats. A gig is the name of the ship's boat set aside for the commanding officer. A dinghy is a small boat for work alongside the ship.

15. Poinsett ship's log, 30 Jul., 31 Jul.; Mayo to SN, 30 Jul. 1839, Records, 114, 145.

16. Mayo to SN, 4 Aug., 6 Aug., 16 Aug., 23 Aug. 1839, Cdr. ltrs.

17. Mayo to Taylor, 26 Aug.; vice versa, 26 Aug., encls. to Mayo to SN, 26 Aug. 1839, ibid.

18. Mayo to SN, 6 Sep. 1839, ibid.

19. Mayo to SN, 2 Oct., 13 Oct., 26 Oct., with encls. Wood to Mayo, 28 Sep., 30 Sep., 4 Oct., and McCreery to Mayo, 8 Oct. 1839, ibid.

20. Mayo to SN, 8 Sep., 17 Sep. 1839. ibid.

21. Davis to Mayo, 29 Sep., encl. to Mayo to SN, 13 Oct.; Mayo to SN, 1 Oct. 1839, ibid.

22. Fort Kemble was built by Mayo at a site not far from the older deserted Fort Dallas, Mayo to SN, 13 Oct. 1839, ibid.

23. Mayo to SN, 15 Nov., 30 Nov. 1839, ibid.

24. SN to SN, 17 Oct., SHLS; SN to Mayo, 18 Nov. 1839, Off., Ships of War.

25. Mayo to SN, 27 Dec., Cdr. ltrs.; SN to Davis, 30 Dec. 1839, Off., Ships of War.

26. Mayo to SN, 23 Aug. 1839, Cdr. ltrs.

27. Mayo to SN, 8 Sep. 1839, ibid.

28. Mayo to SN, 18 Nov. 1839, ibid. This adverse evaluation of the steamer was undoubtedly well received by Secretary Paulding who was known to be a foe of steamers. At one time he declared his intention "never to consent to let our old ships perish, and transform our navy into a fleet of [steam] sea monsters, . . ." Sprout, American Naval Power, 114.

29. Mayo to SN, 18 Nov., 27 Dec. 1839, Cdr. ltrs.

30. Mayo to SN, 17 Jun., 2 Oct., Cdr. ltrs.; vice versa, 22 Jun., Off., Ships of War; Wood to SN, 12 Sep., Off. ltrs.; vice versa, 10 Oct., Off., Ships of War; Munn to SN, 8 Sep., Off. ltrs.; vice versa, 12 Oct., Off., Ships of War; Smith to SN, 10 Sep., Off. ltrs.; vice versa, 10 Oct. 1839, Off., Ships of War.

31. Mayo to SN, 15 Nov. 1839, Cdr. ltrs.

CHAPTER 7

1. A centerboard serves the same function as a keel, but it may be raised and lowered at will so as to allow a vessel to sail in shallow waters.

2. McLaughlin to SN, 2 Jul., Off. ltrs.; McLaughlin to SN, 10 Jul., 10 Aug., M-198, M-328, SWLS; vice versa, 19 Aug., 2 Sep., SWLS; SN to John Rodgers, 9 Nov., Off., Ships of War; vice versa, 12 Nov. 1839, Off. ltrs.

3. SN to Mayo, 2 Dec.; SN to McLaughlin, 30 Dec.; SN to Davis, 30 Dec., Off., Ships of War; Mayo to SN, 27 Dec. 1839, Cdr. ltrs.

4. McLaughlin to Chief Clerk, Navy Dept., 10 Dec. 1839, Off. ltrs.

5. This term was used, probably for the first time in the American navy, by the officers and men serving under McLaughlin, Bever, Keel and Saddle, 2; Pond, "Ned Buntline," 24; McLaughlin to SN, 14 Jan., 20 Jan., 4 Feb. 1840, Off. ltrs.

6. Mahon, Seminole War, 265-66.

7. SN to McLaughlin, 2 Dec. 1839, Off., Ships of War.

8. McLaughlin to SN, 20 Jan., Off. ltrs.;
vice versa, 5 Feb., 13 Feb., 10 Apr. 1840; Off., Ships
of War.
9. McLaughlin to SN, 8 Apr., 22 May 1840, Off.
ltrs.
10. E. Shubrick to McLaughlin, 17 Apr., encl.
to McLaughlin to SN, 8 Jul. 1840, ibid.
11. McLaughlin to SN, 4 Aug. 1840, ibid.;
Sturtevant, "Chakaika," 51.
12. Murray to McLaughlin, 7 Aug.; McLaughlin
to SN, 11 Aug., 15 Aug., with encl. Burton to McLaughlin,
15 Aug., 21 Aug. 1840, Off. ltrs.
13. McLaughlin to SN, 11 Aug., with encl.
McLaughlin to E. Shubrick, 9 Aug. 1840, and agreement
between McLaughlin and Housman, ibid.
14. SN to McLaughlin, 10 Oct., 29 Oct., 11 Nov.,
Off., Ships of War; vice versa, 31 Dec. 1840, Off. ltrs.
15. Mahon, Seniacle War, 282-84.
16. Niles, LX, 71-72.
17. Ibid.
18. McLaughlin to SN, 24 Jan. 1841, Off. ltrs.
19. McLaughlin to SN, 31 Dec. 1840, 24 Jan.
1841, ibid.
20. SN to SN, 10 Jun. 1840, SNLS.
21. McLaughlin to SN, 10 Jul., Off. ltrs.;
vice versa, 30 Jul. 1840, Off., Ships of War.
22. McLaughlin to SN, 17 Sep., Off. ltrs.;
vice versa, 19 Nov. 1840, Off., Ships of War.
23. McLaughlin to SN, 25 Jan., 24 Apr., Off.
ltrs.; vice versa, 13 Feb. 1841, Off., Ships of War.
24. McLaughlin to SN, 26 Jun. 1841, Off. ltrs.

CHAPTER 8

1. Armstrong to SN, 9 Jul. 1840, A-192, AGLB.

2. SN to SW, 23 Jul. 1840, N-69, ibid.
3. SW to SN, 10 Sep. 1840, SWLS.
4. Sprague, Florida War, 274-75; Mahon, Seminole War, 297.
5. McLaughlin to Worth, 18 Jul. 1841, National Archives, Department of Florida, Box 4.
6. Ibid.; ST to SW, 6 Jul., T-213; Quarter-master General to SW, 22 Jul., n.d., Q-33, Q-35, SWCLR; SN to McLaughlin, 10 Jul., Off., Ships of War; vice versa, 16 Jul., 25 Jul. 1841, Off. ltrs.
7. Faixhan shot is a hollow shot filled with a fused explosive charge. It is named after a French artillery officer, Henri Joseph Faixhan, who in 1822 recommended such charges for use in the French navy.
8. McLaughlin to SN, 17 Jul., 16 Aug., 7 Sep. 1841, Off. ltrs.
9. Order No 1, Headquarters, Army in Florida, 8 Jun. 1841, reprinted in Sprague, Florida War, 275; McLaughlin to SN, 8 Oct. 1841, Off. ltrs.
10. Sprague, Florida War, 271.
11. General Order, Florida Expedition, 5 Oct. 1841, encl. to McLaughlin to SN, 16 Feb. 1842, Off. ltrs.
12. C. R. P. Rodgers to SN, 12 Sep. 1842, ibid.
13. McLaughlin to SN, 25 Oct., ibid.; Burke to Childs, 3 Nov., reprinted in Sprague, Florida War, 334-35; Niles, LXI, 181.
14. McLaughlin to SN, 30 Oct., 2 Nov. 1841, Off. ltrs.
15. McLaughlin to SN, 25 Nov., 27 Nov. 1841, ibid.
16. Memorandum, Headquarters, Army of Florida, 30 Oct., encl. to McLaughlin to SN, 27 Nov. 1841, ibid.
17. Worth to McLaughlin, 8 Dec., encl. to McLaughlin to SN, 23 Dec. 1841, ibid.
18. McLaughlin to SN, 23 Dec. 1841, ibid.
19. McLaughlin to Worth, 26 Dec. 1841, reprinted in Sprague, Florida War, 378-80.

20. McLaughlin to SN, 23 Dec. 1841, Off. ltrs.
21. McLaughlin to SN, 17 Jan. 1842, ibid.
22. Marchand to McLaughlin, 27 Jan., encl. to McLaughlin to SN, 30 Jan. 1842, ibid.
23. Worth to McLaughlin, 3 Jan., encl. to McLaughlin to SN, 16 Jan. 1842, ibid.; Mahon, Seminole War, 307.
24. McLaughlin to SN, 17 Jan. 1842, Off. ltrs.
25. McLaughlin to SN, 18 Mar. 1842, ibid.
26. Marchand to McLaughlin, 24 Feb., encl. to McLaughlin to SN, 3 Mar.; Marchand to McLaughlin, 23 Mar., encl. to McLaughlin to SN, 27 Mar. 1842, ibid.
27. McLaughlin to SN, 27 Mar. 1842, ibid.
28. McLaughlin to John Rodgers, 1 Feb. 1842, reprinted in Sprague, Florida War, 381-82.
29. Preble, "Canoe Expedition," 31.
30. Johnson, John Rodgers, 58-59.
31. John Rodgers to McLaughlin, 12 Apr. 1842, reprinted in Sprague, Florida War, 384-86.
32. McLaughlin to SN, 26 May 1842, Off. ltrs.
33. Ibid.
34. McLaughlin to SN, 29 Apr., 26 May, ibid.; McLaughlin to Worth, 7 Apr. 1842, reprinted in Sprague, Florida War, 282-83.
35. Mahon, Seminole War, 309-10.
36. SN to McLaughlin, 5 May, Off.; Ships of War; vice versa, 9 Jun., 19 Jul. 1842, Off. ltrs.

CHAPTER 9

1. Sprague, Florida War, 354.
2. Johnson, John Rodgers, passim.
3. DAB.

4. "John T. McLaughlin," Officers' Service Abstracts, 1798-1893, Navy Department, Records of the Bureau of Naval Personnel, Record Group 24, National Archives; "Obituary," Daily National Intelligencer, 7 Jul. 1847.

5. Eller, Riverine Warfare, 38.

6. Ibid., 52.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

George Edward Buker was born September 13, 1923, at Bangor, Maine. In June, 1941, he graduated from John Bapst High School. He entered the University of Maine in the fall of 1941. With the entry of the United States into World War II, he entered the Naval Aviation Cadet program and was commissioned as a naval aviator in December, 1943. From 1942 until 1963 he served on active duty in the United States Navy, and retired with the rank of commander. Following his retirement, he entered Jacksonville University and in August, 1964, he received the degree of Bachelor of Arts, magna cum laude. He enrolled in the Graduate School of the University of Florida and received the degree of Master of Arts in August, 1965. The following year he was an instructor on the faculty of St. Johns River Junior College at Palatka, Florida. In the fall of 1966, he returned to the University of Florida to work toward the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. Since September, 1968, he has been an Instructor in History at Jacksonville University.

George Edward Buker is married to the former Dorothy E. Arnold and is the father of two sons.

This dissertation was prepared under the direction of the chairman of the candidate's supervisory committee and has been approved by all members of that committee. It was submitted to the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and to the Graduate Council, and was approved as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

August, 1969

E. Ruffin Jones
Dean, College of Arts and
Sciences

Dean, Graduate School

Supervisory Committee:

J. W. Mahan -
Chairman

Samuel Proctor

L. A. C. Custer
A. M. C. Custer

A. C. Custer